

# Pre-appointment hearing – Chair of Swansea Bay University Health Board

April 2024

## 1. Introduction

### Swansea Bay University Health Board

- 1.** Swansea Bay University Health Board (Swansea Bay UHB), formerly Abertawe Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU), was created on April 1 2019, after responsibility for providing healthcare services in the Bridgend County Borough Council area passed from ABMU to the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- 2.** Swansea Bay UHB covers a population of around 390,000 people, has an annual budget of over £1 billion and employs around 12,500 staff, 70% of whom are involved in direct patient care. Swansea Bay UHB provides integrated care for patients and delivers acute, intermediate, mental health, community and primary care services to people in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. In addition, it provides a large range of regional and sub-regional services including cardiac surgery and burns, plastic surgery for patient in the South West of England, forensic mental health for South Wales and learning disability services from Swansea to Cardiff as well as for the Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil areas.
- 3.** Primary Care Services are provided through general practitioner, opticians, community pharmacists and dentists who all operate as independent contractors. Swansea Bay UHB manages GP Out-of-Hours Services and General Medical Services for Swansea prison.



4. Swansea Bay UHB has three acute hospitals providing a range of services:
  - Neath Port Talbot Hospital in Port Talbot;
  - Singleton Hospital in Swansea; and
  - Morriston Hospital in Swansea.
5. There are also a number of smaller community hospitals and primary care resource centres providing important clinical services to residents outside the three main acute hospital settings.

## 2. The pre-appointment hearing process

### The process

6. Welsh Government and the Senedd agreed to introduce pre-appointment scrutiny by Senedd committees of certain public appointments which are of significant public interest or which will have a significant impact on the public. The aim is to further improve the scrutiny and transparency of the public appointment making process.
7. Pre-appointment scrutiny generally takes the form of a public pre-appointment hearing with the preferred candidate. For appointments to these agreed roles, it is for the relevant committee to decide whether it wishes to carry out a pre-appointment hearing.

### Pre-appointment hearing

8. On 19 March 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced that Jan Williams had been appointed as Chair of Swansea Bay UHB, subject to a pre-appointment hearing with the Committee.
9. The pre-appointment hearing took place on 25 April 2024. The meeting transcript is available on the [Committee's website](#).

**10.** To inform the hearing, the Welsh Government provided us with a briefing on the process (“[the Welsh Government briefing](#)”), Jan Williams’ [CV](#) and [personal statement](#), and a copy of the [information pack for applicants](#). The Committee also asked the preferred candidate to complete a [questionnaire](#) in advance of the hearing.

### 3. The recruitment process

**11.** The post was advertised on the Welsh Government’s website and in paid advertisements between 24 January 2024 and 14 February 2024.

**12.** Stakeholder sessions were held on 7 and 8 March 2024. The stakeholder session members were representatives from the health board, their partners and stakeholders and Welsh Government. Candidates were asked to introduce themselves giving a brief overview of why they had applied for the role. This was followed by a 30 minute open discussion with panel members.

**13.** Seven applications were received. Three candidates were recommended for interview, although one candidate withdrew their application prior to the interviews taking place. Interviews took place on 29 February 2024. The Assessment Advisory Panel considered there to be one appointable candidate.

#### Role and person specification

**14.** The Welsh Government set out the role of the Chair in the information pack for applicants. This included notification that, at the Committee’s discretion, appointment to the role of Chair could be subject to a pre-appointment hearing.

**15.** The Chair will be accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care for the performance of the Board and its effective governance, upholding the values of the NHS, and promoting the confidence of the public and partners. Detailed responsibilities of the Chair can be found in the [information pack for candidates](#).

## 4. The Welsh Government’s preferred candidate

### Background

**16.** Jan Williams, the Welsh Government’s preferred candidate, is currently the Chair of Public Health Wales. She has held a number of high profile public roles in health, policing and criminal justice, education and the third sector.

**17.** In the pre-appointment questionnaire, she states:

*I was born and brought up in Swansea and my family home has always been in the City, irrespective of my place of work. I have decades of experience as a patient, visitor, unpaid carer and NHS worker, across Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea.*

*I am a dedicated public servant and believe passionately in the power of public service as a force for good. I live and breathe NHS values and am committed to playing my small part in enabling the NHS at 100 to be a quality-led, agile and sustainable service in which the country can take great pride.*

*Whilst the wider determinants of health lie outside the NHS, the health and care system impacts significantly on the conditions "in which people are born, grow, live, work and age." (WHO) The Swansea Bay Population Health Strategy offers a significant chance, working with partners, to improve the health, well-being and resilience of the population, and reduce health inequalities*

### Our view

**18.** In line with the guidance on pre-appointment hearings agreed between the Welsh Government and the Senedd, our role is to set out our views on the suitability of the Welsh Government’s preferred candidate.

**19.** During the pre-appointment hearing, we had a wide-ranging discussion with the preferred candidate, Jan Williams. This covered her experience of working in other organisations, including roles in health, policing and criminal justice, and the third sector. Ms Williams confirmed that she did not hold any other appointments that she believed were, or could be perceived to be, conflicts of interest.

**20.** We talked about the need for strong governance and good financial management, given that the Board was currently in enhanced monitoring in respect of financial management. Ms Williams acknowledged that the Board had posted a deficit at the end of 2023-24 and said she wanted to understand how the deficit was constituted, how much of it was non-recurrent or recurrent, and would then want to look at the plans for 2024-25. She said she would also want to look at how Swansea Bay UHB compared with other health boards and with best practice, in terms of deficits posted.

**21.** We asked Ms Williams about the enhanced monitoring of maternity and neonatal services in the health board. She said that she had read the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales report on maternity services and the Board’s response, and there were issues across the piece around quality, safety and sustainability. She advised that an independent review process was currently underway, and said that one of her first priorities would be to monitor the progress of that review.

**22.** We asked Ms Williams about her commitment to promoting and mainstreaming the Welsh language and her views on collaborating more closely with Hywel Dda UHB, given the large number of patients in the Hywel Dda area that use Swansea Bay UHB services. Ms Williams told us that she was learning Welsh. She highlighted practices she had put in place in her current role, such as access to courses and training for staff, and encouraging other board members to use Welsh. She acknowledged the need to ensure that, irrespective of whether they are Swansea Bay or Hywel Dda patients, for those people who want to receive their care and treatment through the medium of Welsh, there need to be sufficient numbers of staff trained to do so, or translation facilities available. She advised that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care had issued a direction to Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda to set up a joint committee which, in addition to ensuring compliance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, would work to build a culture whereby people from either health board could communicate through the medium of Welsh, if they wished to do so.

**23.** We asked about Ms Williams’ early priorities for dealing with the ever-growing demand on health services. She told us that she would look to use existing resources because of the current constraints facing the NHS and the need to “keep the show on the road”. She then talked about the importance of “helping people to help themselves”, using the example of type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer screening. She went on to say that one of the board's roles was to build and sustain strategic partnerships, because “the NHS does very little on its

own, and we certainly can't keep or help people to be healthy without a whole range of wider partnerships”, and she saw it as her role to ensure this happens.

**24.** Finally, we talked about the importance of instilling a culture that encourages staff, patients, families and the public to raise concerns. Ms Williams said that she had “engagement with individual patients, families and communities wired into me throughout my whole experience”, and while legislation has placed a duty of candour and duty of quality on health boards, she believed it was for the board to set the tone and culture. She said she wanted staff to “come to work to be able to give their best, to be their best authentic selves” and not be afraid in any way if things go wrong. She recognised that things will go wrong but said when they do, the important thing is to acknowledge it, apologise, look to put it right and make improvements.

**Conclusion 1.** Based on her performance and responses to questioning at the pre- appointment hearing, we see no reason why the Welsh Government’s preferred candidate, Jan Williams, should not be appointed to the post of Chair of Swansea Bay UHB.

**25.** We wish her well for the future and look forward to scrutinising her constructively in her role as Chair of Swansea Bay UHB during the course of this Senedd.