



**Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB)
Minutes of the Special Board Meeting
held on 23 October 2025 at 10:00am**

| Present: | | |
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| Jan Williams | (JW) | Chair |
| Stephen Spill | (SS) | Vice Chair |
| Abigail Harris | (AH) | Chief Executive Officer |
| Jean Church | (JC) | Independent Member |
| Marie Davies | (MD) | Executive Director of Planning and Partnerships |
| Deb Lewis | (DL) | Chief Operating Officer/Executive Director of Primary Care & Community and Mental Health & Learning Disabilities |
| Anne-Louise Ferguson | (ALF) | Independent Member |
| Andrew Griffiths | (AG) | Independent Member |
| Darren Griffiths | (DG) | Executive Director of Finance and Performance |
| Keith Lloyd | (KL) | Independent Member |
| Martin Lloyd | (ML) | Independent Member |
| Nicola Matthews | (NM) | Independent Member |
| Reena Owen | (RO) | Independent Member |
| Patricia Price | (PP) | Independent Member |
| Tina Ricketts | (TR) | Executive Director of Workforce & OD |
| Liz Rix | (LR) | Executive Director of Nursing and Patient Experience |
| Nuria Zolle | (NZ) | Independent Member (via Teams) |

| In Attendance: | | |
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| Matthew John | (MJ) | Director of Digital |
| Dr Raj Krishnan | (RK) | Deputy Executive Medical Director |
| Hazel Lloyd | (HL) | Director of Corporate Governance |
| Carys Richards | (CR) | Senior Corporate Governance Manager |
| Claire Taylor | (CT) | Llais |
| Richard Thomas | (RT) | Director of Insight, Communications and Engagement |

| Apologies: | | |
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| Pat Dunmore | (PD) | Stakeholder Reference Group Chair |
| Richard Evans | (RE) | Executive Medical Director & Deputy Chief Executive |
| Christine Morrell | (CM) | Executive Director of Therapies and Health Science |
| Gill Richardson | (GR) | Executive Director of Public Health (Interim) |



| Acronyms | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| SBUHB | Swansea Bay University Health Board | WG | Welsh Government |
| WTE | Whole Time Equivalent | HCSW | Health Care Support Worker |
| HEIW | Health Education and Improvement Wales | RN | Registered Nurse |

The meeting began at 10:01.

| Minute Ref: | Agenda Item |
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| PART 1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS | |
| 1.1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS | |
| 183/25 | <p>Opening the meeting, JW extended a warm welcome to those attending in person, and those on-line. She explained that, as the Governing Body of the organisation, the Board had a range of responsibilities which were discharged formally through the bimonthly Board meetings, with a comprehensive agenda. There were times when the Board had to meet outside this meeting cycle and this was the case today, with the sole purpose being to consider the Band 2/3 Health Care Support Worker (HCSW) matter.</p> <p>JW went on to say that SBUHB was one of the largest employers in Wales, with 12800 whole time equivalent (WTE) staff, 14% of whom were HCSWs, the bedrock of the workforce, whose role was pivotal role in overall patient care and experience.</p> <p>The Board had a duty of care and responsibility for the health and wellbeing of all staff; JW was conscious that this would sound hollow to the HCSWs, who thought that the Board had betrayed them and gone back on its word to make the relevant payments in December. On behalf of all Board members, JW apologised for the anger, distress and disappointment that the decision to 'pause' in September had caused.</p> <p>The Board had never set out to renege on the agreement and had acted in good faith throughout; the 'pause' stemmed from the understanding that the National Agreement was on the point of concluding and the genuine wish to ensure that HSCW staff had parity with the rest of Wales.</p> <p>In the event, there had been no such conclusion and the Board had seen, listened to, and read about the profound effect on staff, not</p> |



least through the submission of a petition with 2000 signatures. Board members acknowledged the damaging effect on trust and committed to working tirelessly to build it, beginning then and there.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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| 184/25 | <p>There were apologies from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Evans, represented by Dr Raj Krishnan • Chris Morrell • Gill Richardson • Pat Dunmore |
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1.3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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| 185/25 | There were no declarations outside those already on the Declarations of Interest Register. |
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PART 2. MAIN AGENDA

2.1 'HEALTHCARE WORKERS BETRAYED – SWANSEA BAY HEALTH BOARD HONOUR YOUR PROMISE' PETITION

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| 186/25 | <p>JW invited TR to introduce this item. TR confirmed that she, and a Board delegation, had met with staff and their representatives on Tuesday, 21 October, and received the 2000 signature Petition. She now presented it for formal receipt and acknowledgement.</p> <p>The Board RECEIVED and FORMALLY ACKNOWLEDGED the Petition.</p> |
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2.2 BAND 2/3 HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKERS REPORT

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| 187/25 | TR referred to JW’s opening remarks and provided additional background, namely that discussions had begun in May 2024, with SBUHB entering into a local agreement with Unison on 9 December 2024, facilitated through NHS Wales Employers. This committed SBUHB to make payments to those staff involved by 31 December |
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2025. At that time, SBUHB understood that other health boards would follow on, through a National Agreement.

TR reported on the conclusion of a robust validation process: of the 1133 HCSWs in scope, 1105 (97%) met the criteria for the upgrade to band 3. The cut-off date for December payroll was 23 October 2025 and the Board had to complete the agreement today, to enable the payroll function to process the payments in time for the 21 December 2025 payroll.

Delays in the completion of the National Agreement meant that there was no final national position, and the SBUHB agreement was in line with version 14, extant in December 2024.

JW thanked TR for her briefing and invited questions and comments: RO welcomed the report and the Board's ability to honour the commitment to make payment in December; she had formed part of the Board delegation on 21 October and had found the experience to be profound. The rebuilding of trust was essential, and RO looked to the Board to do this. She thanked all those involved in steering a positive way through such a complex matter.

JC echoed RO's comments and recognised the need to rebuild relationships with staff. TR confirmed the scheduling of a meeting with Unison and the HCSW Negotiating Committee immediately following the Board meeting; a series of engagement and communication events would take place, to begin to rebuild trusting relationships and also to hear directly from some of the staff involved.

SS associated himself with the comments made by the Chair at the start of the meeting and with those made by other Board colleagues. JW then invited AH as Chief Executive, and Accountable Officer, to comment.

AH expressed her sincere apologies for the distress and anger caused by difficult decision to pause implementation in September 2025; the Board had wanted to ensure that HCSW staff in Swansea Bay had parity with colleagues across Wales and had understood finalisation of the National Agreement to be imminent.

The Board had heard staff voices very clearly and AH thanked Unison colleagues and those staff who had voiced their concerns, emphasising the importance the Board placed on hearing from front-line staff. She also extended her thanks to SBUHB colleagues and to Welsh Government (WG) colleagues for their hard work in enabling the Board to reach today's position.

This was a complex matter, and AH thanked the staff involved in the individual validation exercises over the summer months, concluding



in August 2025. The rigour of the process provided assurance to the Board.

Today marked a significant and welcome step forward and an opportunity to start to rebuild trust, as the Board valued the Partnership Forum as a key part of its collaboration machinery. AH then reflected on the role of HCSWs as a critical part of the SBUHB family; they spent the most time with patients and contributed significantly to patients’ care and overall experience. AH also referred to the Board’s wider statutory responsibilities, and particularly the requirement to operate within its resource allocation. The organisation was currently in financial deficit and had to determine a three-year trajectory, to return to service and financial sustainability. This would require the design of, and delivery against, a number of workforce planning, service modernisation and service improvement actions, in line with SBUHB strategic objectives.

The Board:

- **APPROVED** the payments to Band 2 Healthcare Support Workers in the December 2025 payroll.
- **ACKNOWLEDGED** Welsh Government support to address this in 2025/26.
- **AGREED** that the ongoing revenue costs and benefits realisation would form part of the 2026/27 financial planning process.
- **ACKNOWLEDGED** that the recognition payment was a special payment which would require Welsh Government approval.
- **AGREED** to remit to the Workforce & OD Committee oversight of the Band2/3 implementation process and ongoing workforce modernisation.

PART 3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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| 188/25 | JW advised that, overnight, another issue had emerged, in the form of an Open Letter from the student nurse cohort in Swansea University, who were nearing the end of their training who would shortly be seeking registered nurse (RN) employment. JW asked LR to give the Board the background to the issue. |
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LR advised that the nursing cohort was nearing the end of training; SBUHB currently had no Band 5 adult branch vacancies, but work was in hand to identify opportunities, both in SBUHB, and in neighbouring health boards. She was working closely with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the Universities to explore all possible options.

JW confirmed with KL that Swansea University would be offering support and he agreed to action this with University colleagues.

ACTION: KL

JW asked HL to circulate the Open Letter to Board members and LR to bring a report to the November Board meeting, to include the wider all-Wales dimension and the implications for strategic workforce planning. **ACTION: HL, LR**

The Board:

ACKNOWLEDGED the submission of an Open Letter from a cohort of student nurses in Swansea University.

AGREED to receive a formal report at the November Board meeting.

**Next Health Board Meeting: Next SBUHB Board Meeting:
Thursday 27 November 2025, Swansea University**

The meeting concluded at 10:19.