

National Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – 11 February 2026

The minutes from the National Advisory Board Meeting on 11 February 2026

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Attendance

Attendees

- Ruth Hussey (Chair)
- Stuart Davies (Provider Domiciliary Support Service)
- Tomos Davies (Children's Commissioner's Office)
- Natalie Fletcher (Provider)
- Rachel Harris (Provider Full Day Care)
- Cari Jones (Carer)
- Bethan Kay (LA Early Years Officer and service user of childcare services)
- Peter Max (Provider Residential Care)
- Melanie Minty (Care Forum Wales)
- Gillian Baranski (Chief Inspector)
- Kevin Barker (CIW)
- Annette Hennessey (CIW)
- Sarita Marshall (CIW)
- Vicky Poole (CIW)
- Margaret Rooney (CIW)
- Elizabeth Wallwork (CIW)

Apologies

- Valerie Billingham (Office of the Older People's Commissioner)
- Orlaith Brennan (Provider Domiciliary Support Service)
- Kate Cubbage (Carers Trust)
- Alyson Thomas (Llais)
- Jenny Williams (ADSS Cymru)
- Claire Protheroe (CWLWM)

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies.

Members present introduced themselves. New members and first-time attendees were welcomed.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

3. Chief Inspector's update

Key developments since the last meeting included:

- Publication of Module 2 of the COVID-19 Inquiry; CIW submitted a statement and is awaiting Module 6 (care services).
- Recruitment of 27 new inspectors across Wales, including improved Welsh language capacity, particularly in North Wales.
- Completion of the "Ratings: 7 months on" report, with over 90% of ratings awarded good or excellent for care homes and domiciliary support.
- Increased capacity now allows CIW to resume work that had been paused due to staffing pressures.
- Appearance before the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee, including scrutiny of CIW's annual report.
- Reflection on safeguarding failures nationally, with emphasis on systems, learning and the "voice of the child / person at the heart of care".
- Acknowledgement CIW cannot prevent all harm, but can strengthen assurance, systems and partnership working.
- Discussion on board membership and the need to improve representation and diversity on the NAB.

Key themes

- Importance of evidencing the "voice of the people" in inspections and reporting.
- The need to demonstrate impact over time, not just activity.
- Value of partnership working with providers.

4. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) update

Margaret Rooney gave an update on progress against the CIW EDI Strategy, including:

- Embedding EDI within inspection frameworks and organisational processes.
- Anti-racism work and partnerships.
- Changes to registration documentation to strengthen focus on EDI from service outset.
- Use of Practice Worth Sharing to highlight inclusive practice.
- Establishment of an EDI expert reference group with Social Care Wales.
- Improvements to accessibility of reports and digital content (including Easy Read).
- Delivery of bespoke EDI awareness sessions for inspectors.

Challenges identified

- Lack of workforce diversity (particularly ethnic diversity and disability representation).
- Incomplete recruitment and workforce data.
- Need to improve representation and diversity on the NAB itself.

Member contributions

Suggestions included:

- Learning from Social Care Wales' approach to board diversity.
- Payment or reimbursement for people with lived experience contributing to advisory work.
- Outreach recruitment through community networks.
- Involving care workers and people receiving services via flexible or issue-specific engagement rather than formal board roles.
- Considering visibility of non-visible disabilities in data collection.

Actions

CIW to review NAB membership diversity, identify gaps in representation and explore recruitment options and report back with proposals at a future meeting.

5. Voices from members

5.1 Unpaid carers and direct payments

Concerns raised about:

- Unpaid carers not being informed of entitlements.
- Inconsistency between local authorities ("postcode lottery").
- Discharge delays linked to lack of community support.

Actions

CIW to continue to raise issues through local authority inspections and senior leadership engagement and feed intelligence into Welsh Government.

5.2 Commissioning and local authority practice

Concerns raised about:

- Inconsistent fee rates across Wales.
- Increasing tension between providers and commissioners.
- Perceived imbalance of scrutiny between private/voluntary providers and statutory bodies.

CIW clarified powers and inspection frameworks, including equal treatment of local authority and private provision where services are regulated.

Actions

CIW to use future relevant thematic reviews to gather provider experience.

Consider methods to better capture provider and stakeholder feedback during local authority inspections.

6. Strategic Plan – “Assure” Theme

Margaret Rooney gave an overview of current assurance activity:

- Registration, inspection and ratings.
- Local authority inspection work.
- Concerns handling.
- Enforcement processes.
- Thematic reviews.
- Internal quality assurance and governance.

Discussion on how CIW could strengthen assurance, including:

- Better use of intelligence and predictive data.
- Risk-based inspection frequency.
- Greater transparency around enforcement action.
- Stronger focus on leadership, governance and culture.
- Improved communication of what assurance can and cannot do.

Feedback

- Overall confidence in CIW’s assurance role.
- Recognition that assurance can never be absolute.
- Importance of managing public expectations.

Actions

CIW to continue developing proposals on strengthening assurance (including intelligence-led approaches) for Executive Leadership Team consideration taking NAB feedback into account.

7. Communications and Engagement Strategy

Presentation of the draft Communications and Engagement Strategy.

Four key themes:

1. Building awareness and understanding.
2. Enabling meaningful engagement.
3. Strengthening digital and accessible communications.
4. Developing strategic partnerships and internal capability.

Feedback emphasised:

- Importance of raising awareness before crisis points.
- Need for measurable outcomes and prioritisation.
- Value of quick wins to maintain momentum.
- Importance of trust, clarity and countering misinformation.

Actions

CIW to identify priority actions and measurable indicators and finalise the strategy incorporating NAB feedback.

8. Concerns process – updated letters and communications

Vicky Poole shared revised draft letters for responding to concerns.

Two options considered:

1. Option 1: Explaining all possible actions and the decision taken.
2. Option 2: Setting out only the action CIW intends to take.

Members favoured **Option 2**, with suggestions to:

- Improve emotional validation and empathy.
- Consider reading age and plain language.

- Include signposting to support where appropriate.
- Ensure inspectors are encouraged to personalise responses.

Actions

CIW to refine concern response letters, using Option 2 as the main template taking NAB feedback into account.

9. Any other business and date of next meeting

Members welcomed the positive feedback video shown at the end of the meeting.

Next meeting confirmed as **10 June 2026**.

Actions log

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Ref	Action	Owner	Timescale / Next update
A1	CIW to review NAB membership diversity, identify gaps in representation and explore recruitment options and report back with proposals at a future meeting.	CIW (Gillian / ELT)	Ongoing
A2	CIW to continue to raise issues through local authority inspections and senior leadership engagement and feed intelligence into Welsh Government.	CIW	June NAB meeting
A3	CIW to use future relevant thematic reviews to gather provider experience.	CIW	June NAB meeting

Ref	Action	Owner	Timescale / Next update
A4	Consider methods to better capture provider and stakeholder feedback during local authority inspections.	CIW	June NAB meeting
A5	CIW to continue developing proposals on strengthening assurance (including intelligence-led approaches) for Executive Leadership Team consideration taking NAB feedback into account.	CIW	Ongoing
A6	CIW to identify priority actions and measurable indicators and finalise the strategy incorporating NAB feedback.	CIW	Ongoing. Strategy scheduled for publication following end of pre-election period.
A7	CIW to refine concern response letters, using Option 2 as the main template taking NAB feedback into account.	CIW	Ongoing



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