

# Transforming for the Future

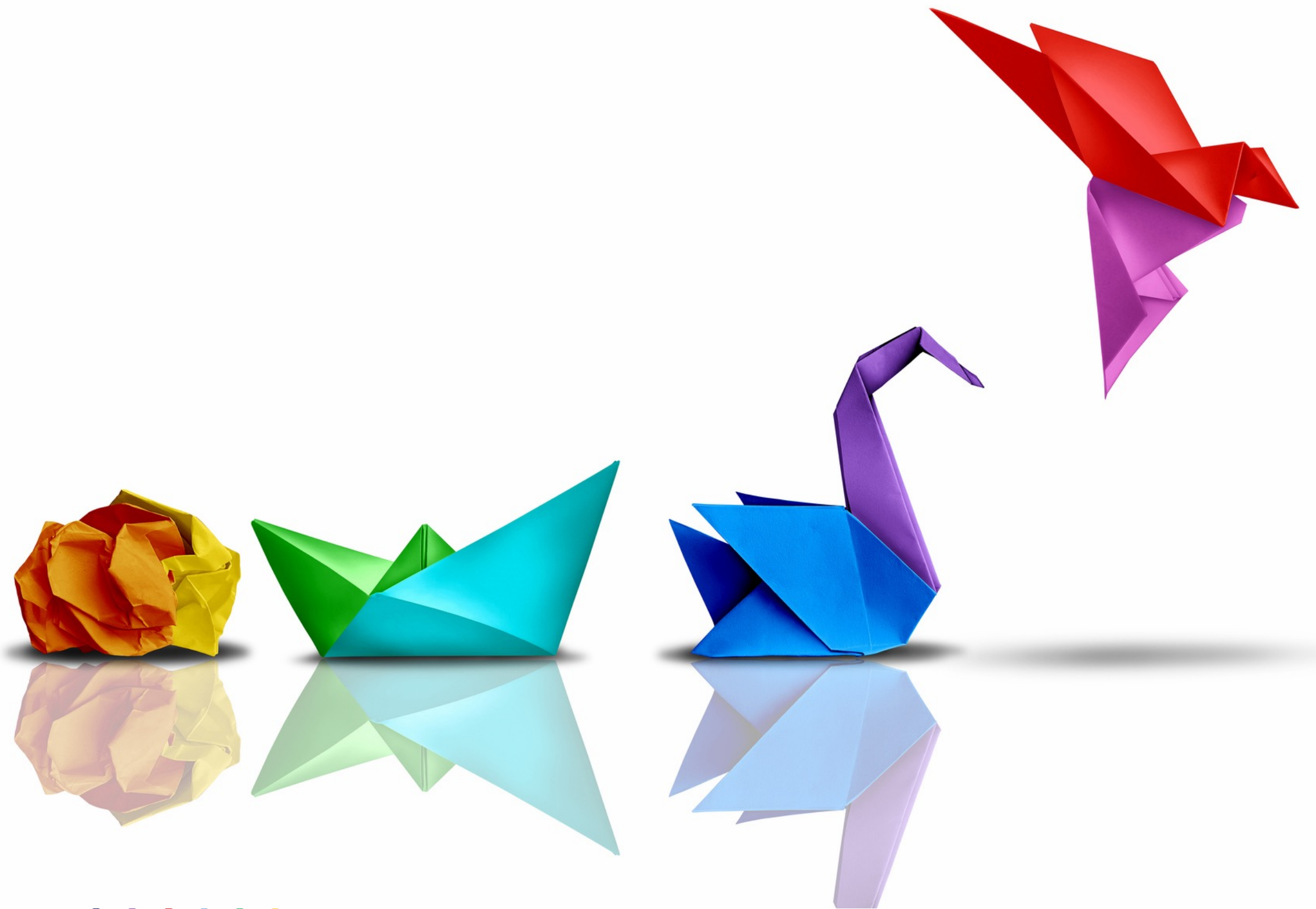
Draft programme narrative – V3.0

22nd May 2026



lechyd gwell  
Gofal gwell  
Bywyd gwell

Better health  
Better care  
Better lives



# Document scope, purpose and status

## Narrative scope

This document sets out an overarching narrative for the Swansea Bay UHB *Transforming for the Future (T4F)* programme (formerly referred to as *Clinical Services Strategic Plan*).

**This has been produced under the supervision of Engagement SRO Richard Thomas and Product Development SRO Marie Davies.**

The narrative will support the current phase of the programme, focussing on the development of foundational principles and a future model of care (our strategic framework). However, it will also underpin future phases which will look to develop the operational *Clinical Service Plans* in line with this model.

The narrative is thorough but not comprehensive and will be further elaborated as the programme progresses and learns from the insights gained through engagement.

## Purpose of the narrative

Aligned to the SBUHB vision, mission, values, standards and strategic objectives as set out in the Board’s organisational strategy ‘*A Healthier Swansea Bay*’, this document has been written to:

- Help ground all those involved in the programme to a shared story.
- Establish the right tone and voice for a broad audience.

- Enable all other sub narratives for the programme to seamlessly evolve (website, FAQs, media narrative, Case for Change etc)
- Ensure continuity of message with previous SBUHB change programmes including *Changing for the Future (2021)*.

Whilst the narrative is in large part intended for a clinical audience, it has been written using broadly accessible language. In this way it sets an example of how we might talk about the programme in the public sphere.

## Document status

- The narrative is written as a PUBLIC-FACING DOCUMENT.
- However, it WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED.
- It contains NO CONFIDENTIAL OR BUSINESS SENSITIVE INFORMATION.\*

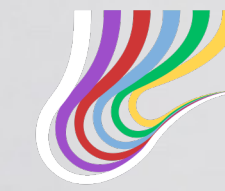
*\* We will endeavour to ensure that the contents of the narrative are not shared in the broader public domain prior to the start of the public engagement period in July, however, it should be noted that there would be little detriment should that happen.*

**Once approved, the narrative should be widely socialised across the organisation to ensure we embed a shared story across the workforce and a shared understanding of the programme’s significance for the future of services.**





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## 1. What is Transforming for the Future?

Transforming for the Future is the NHS programme aimed at transforming the way Swansea Bay University Health Board provides health and care services for the 400,000+ people living in the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas.

As the local NHS, our duty is to provide the highest standard of care that delivers **better health, better care and better lives** for our patients and public.

We have over 14,000 talented, dedicated staff as well as huge resources of skills, expertise, equipment and buildings. And new medicines, treatments and technologies are emerging all the time that can transform the lives of local people.

Transforming for the Future is **about turning our resources into opportunities**. It's about improving the health of our population, strengthening how patients experience NHS care, delivering better patient outcomes and making sure that staff skills and expertise are used in ways that have the biggest positive impact on peoples' lives. It is also about **delivering maximum public** value by making sure that services are organised in the best and most productive way and by living within our means for the benefit of our patients and communities, today and in the future.

In short, it is **about transforming an NHS which was designed around the needs of patients decades ago** and adapting it to the modern challenges we face, making sure we always provide high-quality services that meet the needs of our patients and public and support us in delivering a **healthier future for everyone in our communities**.

The challenges the NHS faces are always evolving. Being the best we can be means **staying flexible**, seeking out opportunities and **being ready to adapt**. Adopting new science and technology, meeting growing demand and learning from facts, feedback and experience are key. This is nothing new for the NHS. It's what we've always done and what we will carry on doing in the best interests of those we serve.

## 2. Today's challenges

It's right that from time to time we take stock of how we do things to make sure we can rise to today's challenges and that we are **flexible and ready to adapt** to those of the future.

**Funding challenges, skills shortages**, and the need to make sure our **buildings and estates** are fit-for-purpose, are making it harder for us to do this. **Our population is changing** too and the way we offer services needs to reflect that. We already face:

- **Significant financial challenges made tougher by the number of sites we operate.** As a health and care system we are running substantial annual deficits.
- **A workforce recruitment and retention problem in some key specialist areas** that makes it harder to improve quality, performance, and safety of care. This is set against a backdrop of oversupply in some other areas of the workforce.
- **Important infrastructure challenges** with sites across our local NHS needing investment and reconfiguration.
- **An ageing population**, high rates of disease, high demand for services and significant health inequalities.

None of this is unique to Swansea Bay. The NHS across Wales finds itself facing similar challenges. The evidence shows that we are simply unable to continue offering services as they are today.

Developing **bold solutions** together, tailored to the specific needs of our patients, public and communities, will **help futureproof our local NHS**. It won't always be easy, but we are certain **that if we do not act now, we will have more serious challenges to face in the future**.

We will continue to work with the Welsh Government, our partners and with our staff, patients and public to find ways to **make the best use of our money, skills, buildings and other resources**, delivering better outcomes for our patients today, and in the future.

### 3. How we got here

Back in 2021 we asked everyone who relies on and uses our services to help us decide how we could organise some of our services better. It was one of the largest listening exercises we've ever run.

- More than nine in every ten responses received supported the idea that services should be **specialist where necessary and local where possible**.
- A similar number supported the evolution of hospital services towards creating **specialist centres of excellence** at our main hospital sites instead of continuing with a model of general hospitals and duplicated services.
- Responses also showed widespread support for **separating planned and emergency care** and for **expanding digital services** in the NHS.

With clear support for the proposals, we set about reshaping how we offered services at our main hospital sites.

- **Morriston** became the centre of excellence for urgent and emergency care, specialist care and regional surgical services for Swansea Bay, including complex medical interventions.
- **Singleton** became a centre of excellence for planned care, cancer care, maternity and diagnostics.
- **Neath Port Talbot** Hospital was transformed into a centre of excellence for orthopaedic and spinal care, diagnostics, rehabilitation and rheumatology.

Most of the proposals agreed in 2021 have now been carried out. Others, however, are still to do, such as the future transfer of maternity services to Morriston Hospital where our care for mothers and babies would be supported by the emergency and intensive care teams there.

Transforming for the Future is **not about starting from scratch**. It is about taking the next logical steps, building on our work in the past and adapting to the challenges we face today. We will continue to implement the changes agreed in 2021 as we progress through the Transforming for the Future programme.

Since we started making changes and moving to a model of care based on centres of excellence, we have been asking people to share their experiences, thoughts and ideas to help us learn more about what is working well, and what could be improved so we can see what 'better' might look like, today and in the future.





We continue to look at the evidence on how services are delivering for patients and how, as the NHS evolves, the needs of our population are also evolving. The evidence shows us that, whilst there are clear benefits to the changes we made, there is still work to do.

As we develop our new model of care we will look again at the care we provide at our hospitals as part of the wider network of hospitals across South Wales to make sure we can meet the healthcare needs of our public and patients in the future.

We know that changing too much and too often can be disruptive and costly, but **we must listen to the facts and take the decisive action needed** to make sure we carry on delivering health and care services that lead to **better health, better care and better lives** for the people we serve.

To do that we need to **look beyond our hospitals at ALL the services we provide**. That is what Transforming for the Future will do.

#### 4. What could help us improve?

There is **no single thing that will help us improve** local NHS services. To help identify the best solutions we first need to hear from a wide range of people, drawing on the experience of patients and public as well as our dedicated, expert staff.

Whatever the solutions, we know we need to change how we do things and develop a **new and transformative model of care**. Whenever we change, we look at how we can make things better. It's required of us by law but it also sits deep in our culture.

We also believe that the most effective solutions are found by combining ambition, drive and creativity with honest, fact-based reflection. Sometimes people call this working to **the art of the possible**.

We are always engaging with the people who use and rely on our services and have been having these discussions for some time.

That has helped us develop an understanding of some of the things that may be needed, and our role in delivering them.

- **Having the right resources**. Some of the challenges we face are about having the right staff, with the right skills and experience, to do the work we need. Others are about having and maintaining buildings that allow us to deliver 21st century health care focussed on the needs of our patients. And we know that there would be a lot to gain by having the right technology infrastructure in place.

All of this, of course, **needs to be properly financed**. We currently spend more than we have in Swansea Bay. This year alone we are **required to find at least £65m savings** and we'll need more in future years as we move towards balancing our books.

It is for Welsh Government to set budgets for NHS spending in Wales. The role of individual health boards such as Swansea Bay is to make sure that we **live within our means**, achieve the **best outcomes possible** with what we have and **deliver the greatest possible public value**. In short, it's about **making every pound count**.

- **Less illness**. Reducing illness in our communities will of course reduce the pressures on the NHS, however, the evidence shows us that our population is getting sicker. We won't be able to turn this around by focussing on treatment alone. Early intervention and prevention is proven to be more effective, less costly and to lead to better outcomes for patients and public. And of course, things like poverty, inequality social isolation and deprivation are also key factors.

By partnering with councils, universities and charities, other parts of the NHS and the Welsh Government, and taking what is sometimes called a *Population Health* approach, we can make a big difference for the communities we serve. Success depends on developing an in-depth knowledge of the health and care needs of our communities, understanding how those needs have arisen and whether they can be prevented or avoided.

- **Better ways of working and organising services.** Decision-making on how and where to offer services in Swansea Bay is led by the local NHS. Our evidence shows us that we cannot continue doing things in the same way, with the resources we have, and a population which is getting older and sicker. To continue providing first class public healthcare, a transformative shift is needed, whether that involves moving the focus of provision from hospital to the community or from treatment to prevention, or by improving how systems work by, for example, embracing the opportunities offered by digital technologies.
- **Addressing the bottlenecks.** Another important opportunity to deliver more public value and better patient outcomes is to **reduce the strain on our hospitals** where bottlenecks can often ripple out and affect the whole network of NHS services.

For example, the evidence shows us that many people's health emergencies can be avoided or their severity reduced, but that we often miss the opportunity to act before their health worsens. We could do much more to keep people healthy and avoid many diseases and emergencies that require hospital treatment.

## 5. What will change and who decides?

**No decisions have been made at this stage.** Before we look at *what* to change, we first need to agree on *how* to change. Key to that will be the development of a new, transformative model of care based on principles developed in conversation with staff, patients, public and partners.

A core principle behind our current model of care is that we provide services that are local where possible and specialist where necessary. We want to hear views and opinions on which other important principles should underpin our future model of care.

We will also ask what our public and patients should expect from the NHS and what they can do themselves to help us succeed.

Only later will we look at the questions of where specific services should be provided, and which service changes will be needed.

**There is an urgent need for change, but we must not be rushed.** Being thorough in the way we lay the foundations is critical to how well our local NHS will stand up to future challenges. That doesn't mean it should take a long time if we focus our minds on the task in hand.

When people are cared for by the NHS they put their trust in the knowledge, ability and experience and our clinical experts, but patients and their families remain central to decisions about their care, and rightly so.

It's a similar process when looking at service transformation. The clinical experts lead the process and develop initial ideas, but the NHS is a public service and the public in Swansea Bay must be involved in designing the transformation needed for the future of *their* NHS.

## 6. What happens next?

By listening to all those with a stake in the local NHS, working with partners, and by harnessing the extensive experience and expertise of our dedicated staff, we will design a future model of care.

This starts by bringing the communities and people we serve into the conversation, ensuring that everyone can be involved in shaping plans to transform the NHS in Swansea Bay. We'll outline the case for change and provide the information that people need to get involved – in the way that they need it.

There will be a range of ways to contribute, from in-person events to webinars and surveys (both online and in print). We will inform and engage on social media and offline, making best use of opportunities to inform our public when they visit NHS sites.

We will also take our ideas out into the communities we serve, making sure that underrepresented and less often heard voices are part of the discussion. We want to make sure that we get this right, which means hearing a range of views and seeing things from different perspectives.

Taking everyone's views into account alongside the views of our expert clinical staff we will agree our future clinical strategy. Only then will we start work looking at where to locate our services, and what will need to change to transform the Swansea Bay NHS into an organisation that is ready to face the challenges of today, and the future.

Now is the right time to find new ways to run our local NHS. Working together with our patients and public, our dedicated healthcare professionals, and our partners, **we are confident we will get this right.**

## Programme roadmap

