



# Joint Strategy 2026 - 2032



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# Foreword

**We are proud to present our first joint strategy as Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH) and Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (WCHC). This marks the beginning of a new chapter for health and care in Wirral - one built on collaboration, integration, and a shared ambition to improve the lives of the people we serve.**

The last few years have brought extraordinary challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic tested every part of our services and our communities, but it also demonstrated the resilience, compassion, and commitment of our staff, partners, and the public. We saw how much stronger we are when we work together, and how quickly we can innovate to keep people safe and well. This strategy builds on those lessons - moving beyond recovery to create a sustainable, joined-up model of care for the future.

Our vision is simple but powerful: **together we will create healthier lives and stronger communities**. By bringing together the expertise of a major acute hospital with the strengths of community-based health and care, we are uniquely placed to deliver seamless services that meet people's needs wherever they are - at home, in local settings, or in hospital. In doing so, we are moving towards becoming an Advanced Foundation Trust and an Integrated Health Organisation - the national direction of travel for empowering NHS Trusts and creating a single system of care that breaks down traditional boundaries and puts people at the centre.

This strategy has been shaped through engagement with our patients, staff, partners, and communities. It reflects what matters most to local people: better access, more joined-up care, tackling inequalities, and ensuring our services are sustainable for future generations.

Over the coming years, our priorities will be delivered through a series of clinical and enabling strategies, underpinned by our shared values and commitment to continuous improvement.

We know that a strategy is only meaningful if it leads to real change. That is why this document is not just a plan for the Boardroom - it is a call to action for every member of our workforce, every partner organisation, and every community we serve. Together, we can shape a healthier, fairer future for Wirral and beyond.



**Steve Igoe**  
Chair



**Janelle Holmes**  
Chief Executive



# About us

**We are proud to serve the people of Wirral and beyond through the combined strengths of WUTH and WCHC. Together, we provide services to people living in Wirral and neighbouring areas, including Ellesmere Port, Neston, Cheshire East, St Helens, Knowsley, and North Wales, representing a population of around one million people.**

As Wirral's largest employer, with more than 8,500 staff, we provide a full range of acute, community, and specialist services. Our joint organisation brings together the expertise of a major teaching hospital with the reach of specialist community health and care enabling us to deliver more joined-up services at home, in the community, and in hospital.

Our main sites include:

- **Arrowe Park Hospital (Upton) - the main acute hospital and home to Wirral Women and Children's Hospital.**
- **Clatterbridge Hospital (Clatterbridge) - planned surgery, rehabilitation, stroke, dermatology, and diagnostics.**
- **St Catherine's Health Centre (Birkenhead) - community health, diagnostics, and outpatient services.**
- **Victoria Central Health Centre (Wallasey) - community health, diagnostics, and urgent care.**
- **Marine Lake Health and Wellbeing Centre (West Kirby) - community health, and outpatient services.**
- **Community Intermediate Care Centre (Clatterbridge) - 71-bed reablement facility in readiness for hospital discharge.**

We also deliver care locally through a wide range of clinics, centres and other settings, as well as in schools, care homes, GP practices and people's own homes, with children's services extending across Wirral, Cheshire East, St Helens and Knowsley.

Beyond healthcare, we are proud to play a vital role as an Anchor Institution supporting local jobs, training, and the economy, while helping to reduce health inequalities across Wirral and further afield.



# Our population, services and scale

## Our population



**1 million**

people served across Wirral, North Wales, and Cheshire and Merseyside



**43%**

of children and families supported across the Cheshire and Merseyside region



**22%**

of our population is aged 65+



**97%**

increase in our 90+ population anticipated by 2043



**35%**

of residents live in the most deprived areas across our region

A rising demand in our services is driven by a high prevalence of long-term conditions and an ageing population.

## Our people



**8,500**

combined workforce for WUTH and WCHC



**6,700**

staff employed by WUTH



**1,800**

staff employed by WCHC

## Our locations



**2**

acute hospital sites: Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge



**3**

specialist units: Community Intermediate Care Centre (CICC), Cheshire and Merseyside Surgical Centre, Clatterbridge Diagnostics Centre



**50**

community sites operated by WCHC

Plus many more locations where services are delivered, such as care homes, schools, GP practices and people's homes.

## Our resources



**£630m**

combined annual budget



**£514m**

budget for WUTH



**£116m**

budget for WCHC



**830**

acute hospital beds: Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge



**71**

beds at Community Intermediate Care Centre



**500,000**

outpatient appointments per year



**275,000**

community nurse visits per year

## Performance highlights

- ✓ CQC Good rating for WCHC (2023), with many areas described as Outstanding
- ✓ Trust of the Year finalist (WUTH) at HSJ Awards 2024
- ✓ Maternity Services CQC Good rating for WUTH, with areas of Outstanding practice
- ✓ Endoscopy JAG (Joint Advisory Group) accreditation for excellence in patient care (2025)



Understanding  
our context

# National NHS context

Our strategy is shaped by a changing national NHS landscape. **The 10-Year Health Plan**, published in 2025, sets out an ambition to build a health service fit for the future through three major shifts:

**Moving care from hospital to community**

**Accelerating the transition from analogue to digital**

**Shifting the focus from sickness to prevention**

The plan also emphasises the importance of neighbourhood-based care, with local teams supporting communities to receive more proactive, preventative and personalised care closer to home.

The Health and Care Act 2022 established **Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)** to act as the framework for how health and care organisations work together across local areas. ICSs bring NHS organisations, councils and wider partners into a single structure for planning and improving care, placing a strong emphasis on collaboration and shared responsibility for population health.

Alongside these system changes, the recent development of **Advanced Foundation Trusts (AFTs)** aims to empower high-performing NHS providers with greater freedoms to lead improvements in population health, digital transformation and reducing inequalities.

Building on this, we will see the emergence of provider models using the **Integrated Health Organisations (IHO)** contract as a delivery mechanism. Under this approach, an Integrated Care Board (ICB) may award a trust a capitated, population-based contract, enabling coordinated improved outcomes across hospital, community, primary care and mental health services through a network of providers.

These reforms come at a time of significant pressure for the NHS, including long waits for planned care, sustained pressure on urgent and emergency services, persistent health inequalities, and ongoing workforce challenges.

## What does this mean for us?

For our new joint organisation, the NHS 10-Year Health Plan creates a timely opportunity for our trust to join up hospital and community services, with a key focus on appropriately shifting care from hospital settings into the community.

Our strategy will strengthen neighbourhood and place-based partnerships and use our digital and workforce strengths to deliver sustainable, person-centred care for the people of Wirral and further afield. In doing so, we will strive to build the foundations to become an Advanced Foundation Trust, and in time, an Integrated Health Organisation model.

# Fit for the future



Analogue  
↓  
Digital

Hospital  
↓  
Community

Sickness  
↓  
Prevention

# Cheshire and Merseyside context

## Regional

As part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS), we operate within one of the largest ICSs in the country serving approximately 2.7 million people across nine places. The ICS brings together NHS organisations, local authorities and wider partners to improve health outcomes, tackle inequalities, enhance productivity and support social and economic development.

Our strategy recognises, supports and will align to meet Cheshire and Merseyside's **All Together Fairer: Our Health & Care Partnership Plan 2024-29**. The plan is the overarching strategy for Cheshire and Merseyside's integrated health and care system with a deliberate focus on reducing health inequalities and improving wellbeing using the eight key Marmot principles that encompass the social determinants of health.

Delivery of these eight themes will be grounded in the three All Together Fairer overarching principles focussing on:

- Shifting investment to prevention and equity
- Embedding health equity and fairness in decision making to ensure social justice, health and equity is considered in all we do
- Increasing access to income, employment, benefits and economic opportunity through anti-poverty work



# Wirral context

Wirral is home to around 323,000 people and experiences some of the widest health inequalities in Cheshire and Merseyside. Life expectancy remains below the England average, with persistent east-west differences and gaps in healthy life expectancy. These inequalities are closely linked to deprivation: 35% of residents live in the 20% most deprived areas nationally, with around 83,000 people living in the 10% most deprived communities.

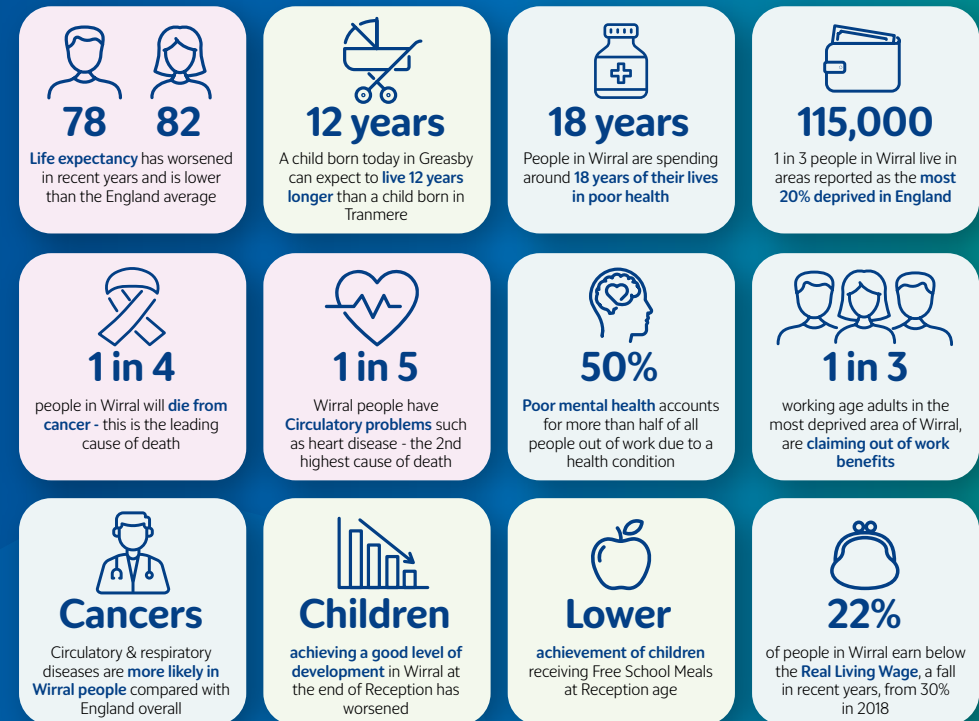
The borough has an ageing population, which is a major driver of demand for health and care services. More than 22% of residents are aged 65 and over, and the number of people aged 90+ is expected to double by 2043. While overall population growth has been minimal, growth in the oldest age groups will most likely place increased reliance on hospital, community and social care services. Long-term conditions, cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental health needs and alcohol-related harm continue to affect outcomes.

Wirral's population is diverse, though predominantly White, with 7.6% of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds and 1 in 20 born outside the UK. This diversity influences both health outcomes and how people access and experience services.

Alongside population need, the local health and care system faces ongoing performance pressures, particularly in urgent and emergency care, patient flow, planned access to services and timely discharge. While significant progress has been made through closer partnership working, these pressures continue to affect patient experience and system performance. The system also faces significant financial challenge, requiring difficult choices and a sustained focus on efficiency, productivity and value, alongside improving quality and outcomes.

While Wirral is our core place, our reach extends beyond the borough. We deliver children's and family services across Cheshire East, St Helens and Knowsley, and provide specialist care for patients from North Wales, reinforcing the importance of working both locally and at scale.

## State of the Borough



# Wirral context

## Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2027) aims to improve health and reduce inequalities across Wirral through five key priorities. It focuses on using economic growth and regeneration to create jobs, develop skills, and improve living conditions, while also strengthening collaboration between health and care services to better support communities with poorer outcomes. The strategy emphasises giving children and young people the best start in life through strong family support, safe environments, and effective early years services. The strategy highlights the importance of creating safe and healthy places to live through improved housing, neighbourhood safety, and access to green spaces. It also promotes partnership working by encouraging organisations and residents to collaborate, ensuring local voices shape decisions and foster a culture of health and wellbeing.

Together, these priorities address both immediate health needs and the wider social factors that influence long-term wellbeing.



## Wirral Provider Alliance

The formation of the Wirral Provider Alliance in 2025 has created a system decision-making and oversight group to respond to strategic commissioning decisions.

Alongside WUTH and WCHC, the Alliance has a membership of senior leaders from: Clatterbridge Cancer Centre, Cheshire Wirral Partnership (CWP), primary care providers including general practice, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise VCFSE providers, Wirral Council and Wirral Hospice.

The shared purpose of the Alliance is **Working in partnership for better health and care in Wirral**. It oversees priority system transformation programmes and is focused on the conditions for system development.

The Alliance will act as a key lever within the Wirral system to drive improvement and change for our population, working in partnership with key providers to ensure our priorities and strategic direction aligns with local population needs. This includes:

- Shifting care from hospital into community and neighbourhood settings
- Tackling health inequalities and supporting healthier ageing
- Strengthening partnerships across health, care and the voluntary sector
- Making best use of our workforce, digital capability and scale



# Wirral context



# Better Together – our shared future

**The coming together of WUTH and WCHC marks a defining moment for health and care in Wirral. By combining our strengths, we are creating a single, integrated organisation that can deliver seamless services across hospital, community, and home.**

Individually, both trusts have achieved a great deal. WUTH is a major acute teaching hospital providing emergency, surgical, and specialist services for Wirral and beyond. WCHC has built a strong reputation for high-quality, community-based care, prevention, and support for children, families, and adults across five Cheshire and Merseyside “Places”. Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.

Our new organisation brings:

- **Acute expertise** – delivering safe, specialist hospital care when it is needed most.
- **Community reach** – supporting independence and wellbeing at home and closer to home. A drive to ensure care is delivered within the community wherever possible.
- **Shared values;**
  - WUTH – Caring, Respect, Teamwork, Improvement
  - WCHC – Compassion, Open, Trust
- **System leadership and coordination** – working with partners across Wirral place and Cheshire & Merseyside ICS.

**Better Together** reflects more than our integration – it is our way of working. It means breaking down organisational barriers, putting people and communities at the centre, and building a culture where patients, staff, and partners feel part of a single team.

By uniting as one, we can strengthen services, tackle inequalities, and support the creation of a healthier future for our populations.

**Better  
Together**  
*for people in our care*

# How we developed this strategy

**This strategy has been shaped by the voices of our patients, staff, partners, and communities. We believe that meaningful change can only be achieved when it is co-designed with those who deliver care and those who receive it.**

Gaining understanding from our service users, members of the public and staff has been key in the development of our strategy. We sought views from our public and community partners across Wirral and the wider Cheshire and Merseyside system. This included local authority colleagues, Primary Care Networks, and the community and voluntary sector. Their insights highlighted the importance of access, equity, and joined-up services across hospital and community care.

Over recent months, we have carried out 1:1 conversations with colleagues and leaders, alongside a series of joint strategy focus groups involving clinical, nursing, allied health professionals, clinical scientists, operational, and staff-side representatives. These sessions gave staff a direct role in shaping our future priorities, ensuring that the strategy reflects both frontline experience and professional expertise.

The feedback we gathered has directly influenced our vision, objectives and priorities. Just as important, this approach sets a precedent: engagement, co-design and co-production will remain central to how we deliver our strategy.





Vision, values  
and strategic  
direction

# Our vision and values

**Our vision and values sit at the heart of our joint strategy, providing the shared foundation for how we will work together as one organisation. They have been shaped by the people who know our services best – our patients, families, carers, staff and partners across Wirral and beyond. Through conversations, workshops and wider engagement, they told us what matters most: care that is safe, compassionate, joined-up and easy to navigate, wherever and whenever someone requires our services.**

WUTH and WCHC each have strong, well recognised values that continue to guide the way we work today. Values are more than statements – they shape how we behave, how we make decisions and the culture we create every day. As we become a single organisation, we will develop a new shared set of values through a dedicated engagement programme, ensuring they genuinely reflect the people who work with us and those we serve. Until then, our existing values remain in place.

Coming together gives us a unique opportunity to build on the strengths of both community and hospital care. Delivering the best outcomes depends on all of us working as one team, supporting each other and keeping people and communities at the centre of everything we do.

A key part of our strategy is strengthening collaboration across the wider health, care and community system, so that people experience care that feels connected and personalised, with fewer hand offs and clearer pathways.

Our shared vision and values reflect this ambition. They bring together what both trusts stand for today and what our communities have told us they need in the future. This direction aligns with national expectations for more integrated, community focused services and supports our aim to develop as a single, joined-up organisation that helps people live healthier lives and strengthens local communities.

Together, our vision and values define who we are and how we will work – **Better Together** – with a clear, shared purpose for the people we serve.



# Vision

“Together we will create healthier lives and stronger communities”

# Values

**caring**  
for everyone  
**respect**  
for all  
embracing  
**teamwork**  
committed to  
**improvement**

**NHS**  
Wirral University  
Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

**NHS**  
Wirral Community  
Health and Care  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Compassion**

Supportive and caring, listening to others.

**Open**

Communicating openly, honestly and sharing ideas.

**Trust**

Trusted to deliver, feeling valued and safe.

# Objectives



Delivering  
Excellence

We will create the conditions for outstanding care and performance



Improve and  
Innovate

We will make improvement and innovation part of how we work



Collaboration &  
Partnerships

We will work as one system and one organisation



Our  
People

We will nurture an inclusive, compassionate culture where people thrive



Healthier  
Communities

We will drive health equity and support healthier lives



Advance  
Digitally

We will develop a secure, connected digital ecosystem fit for the future

# Our strategic objectives and priorities

Our **objectives** set out what we will focus on to achieve our vision and deliver the best outcomes for our populations.

Our strategic **priorities** describe the areas where we will focus our efforts to achieve our objectives. They reflect what we heard through engagement and align with local, regional, and national priorities.



## Objectives



Delivering Excellence

**We will create the conditions for outstanding care and performance**

- Deliver consistently safe, high-quality, person-centred care across all settings.
- Reduce variation and improve outcomes through evidence-based practice and shared standards.
- Strengthen experience of care by improving access and coordination across pathways.
- Embed a strong safety culture built on learning, openness and accountability.
- Meet national standards to ensure timely and consistent care.
- Use our estate well to provide safe, modern environments.

## Priorities



Our People

**We will nurture an inclusive, compassionate culture where people thrive**

- Create a compassionate, inclusive culture that values diversity and supports every member of staff.
- Continue to build a flexible, highly skilled, and future-ready workforce.
- Provide our workforce with the tools they need to provide the best care and support.
- Ensure we continue to provide safe working environments.
- Empower our workforce through investment in education, leadership development, and wellbeing, to enable them to make a real difference.



Improve and Innovate

### We will make improvement and innovation part of how we work

- Embed improvement and innovation in everyday practice to enhance quality and outcomes.
- Deliver medium and long-term financial sustainability through effective use of resources and sustainable ways of working.
- Expand research participation and academic partnerships to translate learning into better care.
- Develop a clear commercial offer that maximises value from our assets and expertise.
- Progress our environmental sustainability goals, including towards Net Zero.



Healthier Communities

### We will drive health equity and support healthier lives

- Deliver care closer to home through integrated neighbourhood teams and local centres.
- Ensure people in communities guide care through co-design using insight and lived experience to reduce health inequalities.
- Remove barriers to equitable care with a focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Leverage our role as an anchor institution to maximise social benefit for our communities.



Collaboration & Partnerships

### We will work as one system and one organisation

- Conclude the integration between WCHC and WUTH to formally create a single organisation.
- Work with partners as one system to design and deliver seamless pathways of care, making best use of our collective resources.
- Strengthen partnerships and collective leadership with primary care, local authorities, NHS trusts, the voluntary sector and wider system partners.
- Leverage our experience and expertise to drive system working across Cheshire and Merseyside ICS.



Advance Digitally

### We will develop a secure, connected digital ecosystem fit for the future

- Create a single, secure digital ecosystem across hospital, community services, and system partners.
- Empower staff with smart, user-friendly technology and strong digital skills.
- Make effective use of data, artificial intelligence and automation to proactively enhance quality, safety and decision making.
- Drive the expansion of digital inclusion and accessibility while recognising the importance of creating opportunities for the digitally disadvantaged.
- Strengthen cyber-resilient infrastructure to protect services and maintain the trusts' cyber security.





Delivering  
the strategy

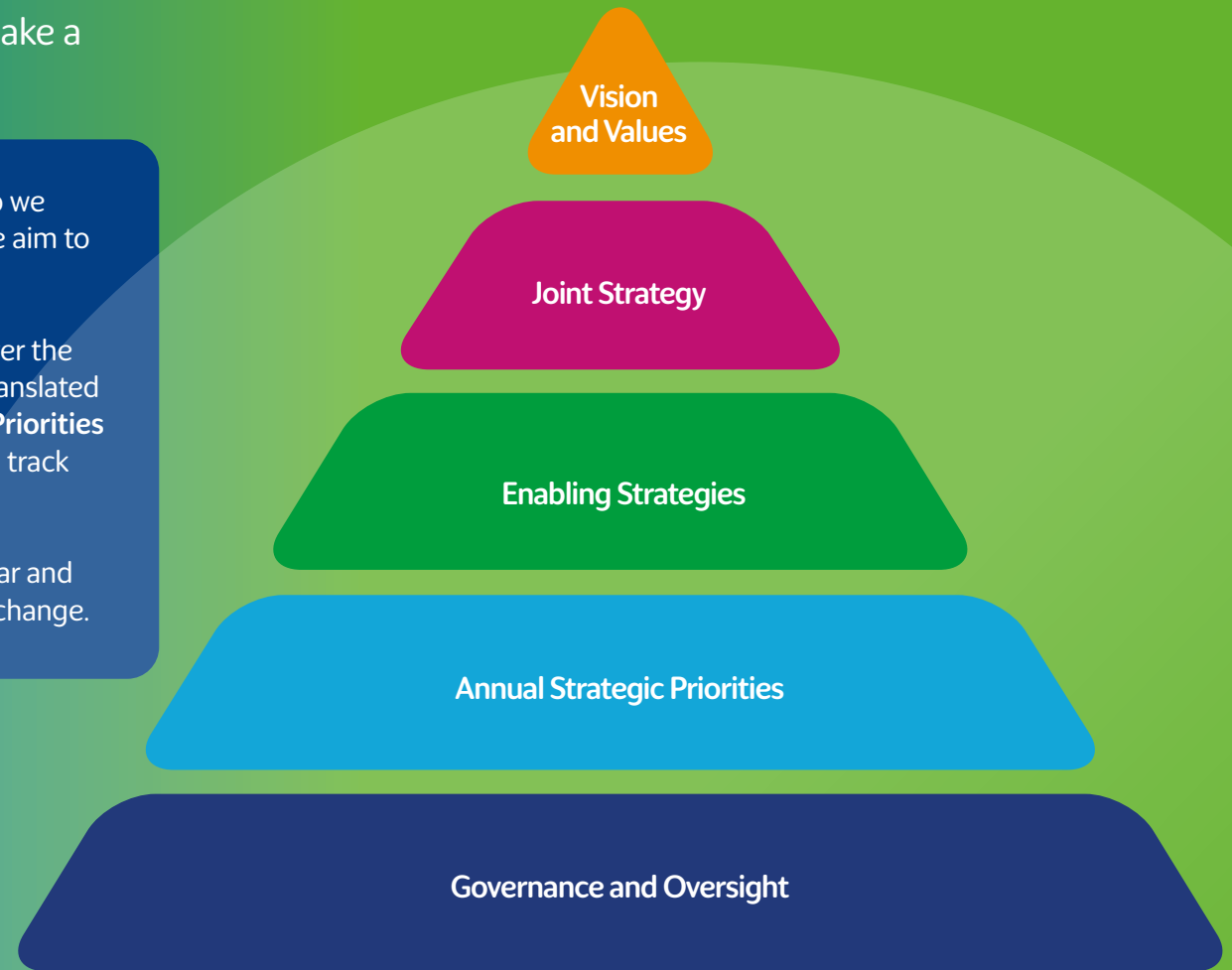
# Our delivery approach

Our approach to delivery follows a simple and clear line of sight from our vision to the everyday actions that make a difference for our communities and our workforce.

It begins with our shared vision and values, which describe who we are and what matters most. The joint strategy sets out what we aim to achieve together as one organisation.

A set of enabling strategies will provide the key actions to deliver the tools, skills and resources needed to support this. These are translated into practical actions each year through our **Annual Strategic Priorities** with strong governance and oversight, ensuring we will stay on track and continue to improve.

Together, these elements form our strategic framework - a clear and connected way of working that will turn our ambition into real change.



# Enabling strategies

Our enabling strategies will be developed across 2026/27 providing the foundations for delivery.

They describe the key areas we must strengthen and invest in to make our strategic priorities achievable. These include both our clinical service strategies and our supporting cross-cutting corporate strategies.





## Clinical Service Strategy

The Clinical Service Strategy will bring together plans from more than 30 clinical specialties to guide how we improve care over the next six years to support healthier communities.

Working in partnership with other providers and people in our neighbourhoods we will create consistent, joined-up pathways, reduce variation and strengthen links between community and hospital services so people experience safe, effective and coordinated care.



## Quality and Safety Strategy

Our Quality and Safety Strategy will ensure care is safe, reliable and continually improving.

We will reduce harm, strengthen clinical governance and build a culture where staff feel confident to speak up and learn from experience.

This will help us deliver consistently high-quality care across all services.



## Experience of Care Strategy

The Experience of Care Strategy will strengthen how we listen to and act on feedback from patients, families and carers.

We will focus on improving communication and removing barriers that make services harder to use, while involving people in shaping how care is delivered.

This will help ensure that everyone receives a compassionate and positive experience in every setting.



## People Strategy

Our People Strategy will create a supportive, inclusive workplace with a positive culture where everyone feels valued and able to thrive. We will be recognised as an organisation that actively provides career opportunities within all our divisions and across all our professions.

We will attract and retain talented people, strengthen leadership, enhance wellbeing and offer clear development opportunities.

This will build a flexible, skilled workforce that can meet the needs of our communities.



### Improvement, Research and Innovation Strategy

This strategy will build a culture of improvement, research and innovation across our organisation.

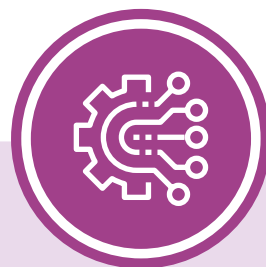
We will support teams to test ideas, use evidence and address challenges in their services. By working with partners, universities and the people who use our services, we will bring new thinking into everyday practice and spread changes that strengthen safety and quality.



### Estates and Facilities Strategy

The Estates and Facilities Strategy will create modern, safe and welcoming environments for patients and staff.

We will upgrade our buildings, improve accessibility and use space more efficiently. Planning our estate as one organisation will support high-quality care, staff wellbeing and a more sustainable future.



### Digital Strategy

Our Digital Strategy will further develop our systems and improve how information is shared across services.

We will use technology – including AI, automation and digital devices such as wearables – to reduce manual work and support clinical decisions, while making it easier for people to access the care they need.

This will create more connected and efficient services for patients, carers and staff.



### Finance Strategy

Our Finance Strategy will ensure we use our resources wisely to deliver safe, sustainable, high quality care.

As one organisation, we will cut duplication and improve value for money, directing investment to the areas where it can make the greatest difference. Strong financial planning and disciplined budgeting will support long-term stability and better outcomes.

# Annual strategic priority cycle

Our strategy sets the long-term direction for our organisation, but we bring it to life through a structured, year round approach to planning and delivery.

Each quarter has a clear purpose: reviewing progress, refining our approach, celebrating achievements, and preparing for the year ahead.

This cycle ensures that our priorities remain focused and achievable, that we are accountable for the progress we make, and that we can respond to national, regional and local needs as they evolve.

By following this consistent rhythm of planning, review and improvement, we turn our strategic ambition into sustained, evidence-based real change.



# Roadmap for delivery

Our roadmap shows how we will move from strategy launch through to delivery. Year 1 will focus on building the foundations – developing our detailed clinical and enabling strategies – with subsequent years focused on integration, scaling, and long-term transformation.

April 2026

Formal launch of our Joint Strategy, including vision, values and objectives, delivery tracked through annual planning cycle

Joint Strategy

May - September 2026

Strategy workshops and engagement held to shape our Clinical Service Strategies

Clinical Service Strategies

October 2026 - April 2027

Development of our Enabling Strategies, setting out the tools, capability and resource needed to deliver the Joint Strategy

Enabling Strategies

2027 onwards

The full Strategic Framework brings together the Joint Strategy, Clinical Service Strategies and Enabling Strategies, and will be tracked through annual planning cycles to translate long-term priorities into clear, achievable actions each year

Annual Strategic Priority Cycle

# Working with our partners

Thank you to our partners for your contributions and support in shaping this Joint Strategy. Working together will be essential in the years ahead, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration to improve health and care for our communities.







# Moving forwards

This joint strategy sets out our shared vision and the journey ahead. It will only succeed if we deliver it together - as staff, partners and communities. At its heart is a commitment to better care, healthier lives and reducing inequalities across Wirral and beyond.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to shaping this strategy - including our patients, carers, staff, partners and community groups. Your insight and support show what is possible when we work as one team across hospital, community and system services.



***“Together we will create  
healthier lives and stronger communities”***



To understand the environment we work in, we carried out a simple **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** exercise across a series of focus groups. Staff from different teams took part, and we also gathered views from senior leaders, board members and system partners.

## Strengths

**Compassionate, person-centred care** - consistently highlighted across all engagement; teams focus on doing what's best for patients, with strong experiences in UCR, Home First, Virtual Wards, paediatrics and community pathways.

**Our people** - staff pride, kindness, resilience and commitment to going above and beyond underpin care delivery; teams describe colleagues as supportive, adaptable and motivated.

**Integrated working already happening** - successful joint pathways (HomeFirst, UCR/ED, cardiac rehabilitation, paediatrics, MSK) show integration is effective and improving flow, access and experience.

**Positive organisational cultures** - values of compassion, openness, teamwork and improvement shared across WCHC and WUTH, reinforced by strong CQC outcomes and national recognition.

**Developing partnerships** - trusted, evolving relationships with primary care, VCFSE, local authority and system partners that support effective transitions of care and population health approaches.

**Breadth of services across settings** - acute hospitals, neighbourhood teams, community clinics, diagnostics and home-based care form a comprehensive, place-based care footprint.

**Improvement and innovation mindset** - staff demonstrate adaptability, problem-solving, digital progress, and willingness to test new approaches, particularly in community and integrated teams.

**Growing education, training and research capability** - teaching hospital status and community education infrastructure strengthen professional development and attract future workforce talent.

**Shared leadership and clear direction** - Joint Board and governance through Integration Management Board create stability and alignment across both organisations.

## Weaknesses

### **Fragmented digital systems**

- numerous IT platforms, dual recording, interoperability gaps, inconsistent documentation and data quality issues hamper seamless care.

### **Inconsistent internal communication and engagement**

- differing communication styles, unclear messages, and difficulty engaging all teams during operational pressure.

**Variation across pathways and processes** - different policies, guidelines, training expectations, governance processes and admin practices create inconsistency and inefficiency.

**Estate limitations and infrastructure gaps** - ageing buildings, lack of space, accessibility issues and variable facilities across acute/community sites constrain service redesign.

**Workforce pressures** - gaps in capacity, skills shortages, rota challenges and reliance on goodwill reduce resilience in both clinical and corporate areas.

**Insufficient understanding across acute & community services** - limited knowledge of each other's roles, pressures and pathways impacts coordination.

**Staff change fatigue and anxiety** - concerns about pace of integration, uncertainty about roles, bases and working patterns, and emotional impact of change.



**Process duplication and inefficiencies** - multiple assessments, duplicated referrals, repeated tests and unnecessary handoffs remain common issues.

**Limited analytical integration** - inconsistencies in data access, reporting and insight limit proactive population health management and improvement.



## Opportunities

**Seamless pathways across home, community and hospital** - clearer transitions, fewer handoffs, reduced duplication, improved flow and faster access.

**Neighbourhood-based and community-delivered care** - expanding services closer to home, using community hubs and local estate to reduce hospital pressure.

**Stronger primary care and VCFSE integration** - deeper collaboration to support admission avoidance, discharge, chronic disease management and holistic care.

**One integrated digital ecosystem** - single patient record, shared documentation, common reporting and better data use to transform safety, quality and efficiency.

**Digital innovation, virtual care and AI** - expansion of virtual wards, remote monitoring, automation, ambient AI and digital-first models.

**One workforce with shared careers and mobility** - joint roles, rotational posts, unified training, widening participation, leadership programmes and talent development across the whole pathway.

**Tackling health inequalities** - neighbourhood insights and community partnerships supporting prevention, access and targeted interventions.

**Optimising estates across the borough** - using both trusts estates, neighbourhood clinics and GP practices to expand diagnostics and outpatient capacity.

**Shared governance and standardised processes** - unified guidelines, safer pathways, streamlined admin and clearer processes to improve efficiency and productivity.

**Place-based commissioning and provider alliances** - strategic commissioning at Place, deeper provider alliances and a unified approach to improving the health and outcomes of the Wirral population.





## Threats

**Financial constraints and limited capital** - cost pressures, ageing equipment, estates investment needs and requirement to “invest to save.”

**Rising demand and complexity** - increasing frailty, chronic disease, urgent care demand and social pressures risk overwhelming capacity.

**Workforce shortages and retention risks** - difficulties recruiting, wellbeing pressures, ageing workforce and potential loss of expertise.

**Integration-related uncertainty** - fears of loss of identity, cultural misalignment, inequity between organisations, or insufficient staff voice.

**Estate and infrastructure constraints** - limitations in diagnostic equipment, outdated spaces and access issues may hinder transformation.

**Political and policy uncertainty** - changes to national priorities, ICS commissioning approaches and regulatory expectations may affect local flexibility, resources and the pace of integration.

**Digital and system risks** - interoperability challenges, system downtime, training needs and complications during transition to unified systems.

**Operational pressures limiting change capacity** - urgent care flow, elective recovery and community caseloads reduce time for transformation.

**Potential loss of community strengths** - risk that valued WCHC community models could be diluted without careful management.

**Stakeholder confidence and communication risks** - insufficient public or partner engagement may affect trust in the integration.



## PESTLEC

To understand the wider external context we operate in, we used a **PESTLEC analysis**. This helped us look at the **political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental and competitive factors that influence our organisation and the services we provide**. The key external factors that informed the development of this Joint Strategy are summarised alongside.

### P

#### Political

- NHS 10 Year Plan: prevention, digital-first, community care
- Shift to DHSC-led national leadership and tighter performance/financial oversight
- Shift in care from hospital to home & community
- Establishment of Neighbourhood Health Centres
- Public Private partnerships (PPP)
- Key focus on prevention
- ICS and Place-based shared governance & accountability
- Place-based partnership working and delivery
- Changes to NHS trust regulation

### E

#### Environmental

- NHS Funding pressures with increased efficiency expectations
- Increased capital and maintenance constraints
- Increased demand on resources
- Continued growing cost of health and care
- Longer term impact of period of austerity, inflation and exchange rates

### S

#### Social

- Widening health inequalities
- Ageing population with more complex care needs
- Increase in informal caring
- Increase in reported addictions
- Strong community/VCFSE assets
- Workforce (wellbeing and retention)
- New skillsets and apprenticeships within the NHS sector
- Increasing digital expectations from citizens
- Shift from analogue to digital

# T

## Technological

- Shared Care Record ambition
- Importance of understanding digital inclusion and exclusion
- National push for digital-first access and interoperability
- Emergence of Artificial Intelligence and automation
- Remote monitoring / telecare
- Digital-first outpatient models
- Personalised medicine and genomic advancements Remote monitoring / telecare / wearables
- Increased home-based care
- Technology training (equity, diversity and inclusion)
- Remote / mobile work expansion
- Robust data protection and cyber security
- Strong digital governance (i.e. AI and automation)

# L

## Legal

- Governance, FT constitutional changes following transaction
- Evolving changes to NHS legislation
- Patient safety and safeguarding
- Professional regulation
- New CQC Single Assessment Framework
- Advanced Foundation Trust status

# E

## Ecological

- Delivering a net zero National Health Service achieving 80% by 2032
- Impact on weather derived health issues
- Antimicrobial resistance and infection threats
- Climate impacts (heatwaves, winter storms, flooding)
- Energy costs - focus on green procurement
- Smoke-free estate
- Recognised Anchor Institution

# C

## Competition

- Any Qualified Provider contracts to independent sector (whole service sustainability)
- Workforce competition
- Strategic commissioning developments
- Multiple provider alliance formations
- Developing group models
- Emerging Integrated Healthcare Organisations
- Partnership opportunities (universities, colleges, VCFSE, technology organisations)

P

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