



# Working for members 2007-08

## Chair's introduction



Simon Jones, Chair

This year has been one of the busiest and most challenging for the Welsh NHS Confederation yet, and certainly one of the most rewarding.

The past twelve months have seen our work dominated by two key events; firstly the emergence of large-scale reorganisation plans, and secondly; a fundamental change to the role and remit of the Confederation as we extend our responsibilities to provide a Welsh NHS Employers' Unit.

Both of these events have played a large part in shaping our work agenda for the year, but alongside this, we have continued with our regular work of influencing policy, supporting members and connecting people across the health and social care community. Our annual conference continues to be the main event of the health calendar, with over 300 delegates attending last year to hear the latest thinking from our high-profile line-up of speakers. At such a busy and important time for the NHS, it can be difficult to find the time to take stock of all that has been achieved. I hope you find this review a useful and illuminating overview of our activities on behalf of members throughout the past year.

Our strength has always been our unique position as the single authoritative and independent voice of NHS management. Our 100% membership of all Welsh NHS organisations makes a big difference in making sure our voice is heard. Thank you all for your continued support.

## Highlights of the year

### Employers' Unit extends our role in NHS Wales

The Welsh NHS Confederation entered a new era in 2008, taking on the role of setting-up and running an NHS Employers' Unit, with a remit to support, advise and represent employers in the development of human resource policy. This is an exciting move in a new direction for the Confederation, which allows us to strengthen the voice of our members in policy development at the highest level. The new unit already has a challenging and growing agenda, which will see its profile and influence increase across the health community in 2009.

### Ensuring members' voices are heard

The Welsh NHS Confederation has been working hard, often behind-the-scenes, to influence the plans for a large-scale restructuring of NHS Wales. We organised a discussion event for senior NHS management during the consultation period, which we used as the basis for our final response to the Minister. Our unique position to act as a single, independent voice ensured our response was highly influential, with many of its key points mirrored in the outcome of the consultation. It has been a very rewarding time for

the Confederation, with the final plans now emerging bearing the hallmarks of work carried out on behalf of our members.

### New services prove popular with members

We launched three new services throughout the year to help keep our members fully informed of developments affecting them from Wales, UK and abroad. Our weekly political round-up, Bay Watch, is a snapshot of all health-related news from the Assembly and has become a vital and widely-read communication link with government. A weekly press round-up provides a useful summary of health news from Wales as well as a pointer to policy developments across the UK. Reportage, a quarterly bulletin produced in conjunction with our counterparts in Northern Ireland, features the latest health policy news from Europe.

## Other highlights

### Connecting

- Our annual conference in 2007 brought together over 300 people from all parts of the health community, and from all parts of Wales and beyond. Held over two days, it was the biggest gathering of leaders in the Welsh health



calendar, and featured expert speakers on the topic of how public services in Wales can work together more effectively to respond to change.

- The internet is becoming an increasingly important way of communicating across the NHS. We have continued to develop our website so it is a more useful and accessible source of information for our members, with news of all our most recent press and political work, and a comprehensive links section connecting you with health policy developments across Wales and beyond.

### Supporting

- We represented the views of NHS management on a number of issues in the press and media, explaining our members' position on difficult topics such as finances, waiting times and reorganisation.
- In one of the biggest media health stories of the year, we gave extensive interviews and comment to press and media across the UK on the issue of free hospital car parking. Our strong media presence influenced the way the story was covered and ensured that the view from management was fairly and accurately represented.
- We held a free Board Development Programme to introduce Non-Executive Directors of newly-merged Trusts to concepts of governance in the NHS. This will continue to be a crucial issue for the NHS and we are planning to follow up these sessions with additional workshops next year.
- We supported the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust in the press, using our ability to act as an independent voice to explain the unique difficulties faced by the Trust in managing such a complex operation. We gave public comments commending the excellent work done by the Trust's management in very challenging circumstances.

### Influencing

- We held regular meeting with key politicians from all parties throughout the year, raising the profile of important issues facing our members and shaping the way policy is developed. This year we have met with senior politicians in Wales and Westminster, including: the First Minister, the Minister for Health and Social Services, Welsh MPs, special advisers and AMs.
- We gave evidence to the parliamentary Welsh Affairs Select Committee to share our experience and

knowledge of cross-border health services. The points raised by our Director, Mike Ponton, were used extensively in shaping the Committee's subsequent report.

- The Assembly's Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee invited the Confederation to give evidence for its inquiry into the proposals to restructure NHS Wales. Our comments were very well received by the committee and many AMs have used our key points to shape the debate on the reorganisation plans.
- Views and information given by the Confederation were quoted frequently in Assembly plenary sessions and committees, such as in debates on car parking, top-up fees and restructuring.
- We also worked to influence the overall direction of the health debate in Wales, for instance by highlighting the opportunity restructuring affords for closer working between health and social care. Our Clinical Futures paper outlined our vision for an integrated health and social care system in Wales.

### Informing

- We held regular meetings with senior journalists to help inform their coverage of health issues. Much of this work goes on behind the scenes, but it is key to making sure that press coverage of important health issues is accurate and fairly balanced.
- Our regular column in the Western Mail continues to highlight important issues on the NHS management agenda. Our column is widely read in the health and policy community and has been successful in informing the debate on many topics, including the importance of leadership, the role of primary care and the future of mental health services.
- A publication produced for the general public explains why the NHS needs to deliver more care out of hospital and in the community. Hospital at Home aims to show the public just how much of their care can be delivered close to their homes.
- Three new regular bulletins, Bay Watch, Reportage and a weekly press summary, are keeping members informed of important policy developments from across Wales, the UK and Europe.
- Our monthly Bulletin keeps members informed of our work on their behalf, and highlights key developments on the health policy agenda.