



Review 2003-04

Chairman's introduction

With our members facing an enormous range of challenges and opportunities, and with health issues remaining top of the agenda for politicians, press and the public, the past year has been an extremely busy one for all of us at the Welsh NHS Confederation. This is reflected in the contents of this review of the year, which I am very pleased to present to our membership across Wales.

Our agenda is rooted in what members tell us they want, which is why we focus in particular on events and on influencing decision-makers. Details of our work are inside, but looking at what we have done as a whole, to sum up what we have achieved in 2003-04, I would pick out two overall themes. The first is that we have succeeded in building a platform for influencing the people who make decisions and who shape the debate. This covers politicians from all parties, in Wales but also - increasingly - in Westminster too. It also includes the media, who play such a key role in shaping the climate in which we all work. Our views are regularly sought and always listened to, which puts us in a strong position to represent members' views and influence the debate.

The second overall theme is that our work is increasingly about building effective relationships; to use a phrase central to the Confederation's work, it is about "connecting". Our events are one obvious example, as they bring people together from across the health field. Another example is our current work on developing a vision for health services in 2015; again, this helps to strengthen relationships between the various health organisations involved, with the aim of achieving a common vision agreed by all.

Finally, some thanks are in order. Our management committee - drawn from Chairs and Chief Executives of LHBs and NHS Trusts - have played a vital role, giving support and guidance, and acting as the voice of the membership. Their work will become increasingly important as we move forward into 2005.

I would also like to pay tribute to the role played by Richard Thomas, who retired as Director in April. Richard not only built a strong and stable team but ensured that the Confederation retained 100% membership of NHS organisations in Wales. This is the foundation of our strength, and it is Richard's lasting achievement. I would also like to thank Richard's successor, Mike Ponton, who took up post in April. In the space of a few months, Mike has already taken the Confederation a long way forward, and I know that his top priority is to ensure that the Confederation continues to deliver for members in 2005.

My thanks also go to Sandra, Jonathan, Sue and Kevin for the important behind-the-scenes role they play in shaping policy, managing the politics and staging our events. With the Confederation now firmly established as the credible voice for the NHS in Wales, it is important that the successes of the last year continue to be built on, and that the Confed places itself at the heart of the debate about the shape of services in the coming years.

I wish my successor and members every success in their individual and collective endeavours.



Lloyd FitzHugh,
Chair, The Welsh NHS Confederation.

2003-04 Highlights

- **Westminster** - briefing and influencing MPs
- **The Welsh Connection** - biggest ever conference, with Derek Wanless
- **Health 2015** - developing a vision for the future
- **Influencing the media** - shaping the debate



Highlights of the year

Westminster - briefing and influencing MPs

Welsh MPs remain important as opinion-formers and decision-makers, even though health is a devolved issue. With this in mind, a key achievement in 2004 was to establish good working relationships with MPs from all parties. We went to Westminster to brief MPs from Labour, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats. We were struck by their keenness to hear about the issues from members' perspective, and to engage in the debate. Following these meetings, we are now briefing MPs on a regular basis. Our views on issues such as the need to redesign services and the importance of the working time directive have been used and quoted in Commons debates. We will be meeting them face-to-face again early in 2005.

The Welsh Connection 2003 - biggest ever conference puts Wanless centre stage

Our 2003 conference drew a record audience of 220 delegates, underlining that The Welsh Connection is now the main event in the health calendar in Wales. But the conference also provided a platform for us to influence the health debate at a critical time, by having Derek Wanless as our key speaker. It meant that he was - quite literally - centre stage at the time when the Welsh Assembly Government was considering its response to the review he advised. A special meeting of the Health and Social Services Committee, focusing only on the review, was organised to fit in with the conference programme. This meant that Derek Wanless could take an update and feedback from members direct from the conference to the committee. In this way, the conference reinforced our influencing work, as well as being a success in its own right.

"Our views are regularly sought and always listened to, which puts us in a strong position to represent members' views and influence the debate"

A Picture of Health 2015: developing a vision for the future

One of our recent achievements is to have built an alliance of health organisations to work together on developing a picture of what health services would look like in 2015. At a time when so many radical changes are transforming the NHS in Wales, we consider that it is essential to have a clear picture of where these changes are leading. Without this, it will be extremely difficult to bring our staff, opinion-formers and the wider public with us. Details of this work will appear early in 2005, but setting up and co-ordinating this project is itself an achievement of which we are proud. It is the first time that the leaders of the key health organisations in Wales have come together in this way, and all of them have acknowledged the importance of the project and the leading role played by the Confederation in making it happen.

Influencing the media - shaping the debate

The media help shape the climate in which we all work. As much of our work involves trying to influence the influencers, a key achievement of 2003-04 has been to become more active - and proactive - in our work with the national media. Rather than simply respond to the news agenda, we have tried to shape it. For example, we secured widespread coverage on BBC Wales of the European Working Time Directive, and members' preparations for it. Examples of good practice from members, provided by us, have been used by newspaper and broadcast journalists. We placed feature articles and letters in the Western Mail and Daily Post on issues such as chronic conditions, the changing role of the hospital and the future of primary care. And behind the scenes we brief senior journalists to help ensure that they understand the issues facing members.

Working for members - November 2003-04

Influencing the influencers - politicians

- Established regular briefings in Westminster for Welsh MPs from Labour, Plaid Cymru and Liberal Democrats.
- Our views on importance of issues such as Wanless and working time directive cited in House of Commons debates.
- Wrote to First Minister Rhodri Morgan on issue of funding.
- Met with First Minister to discuss funding and the change agenda.
- Briefed health spokespeople and AMs from all parties in Wales.
- Presence at Welsh party conferences.
- Regular meetings with Minister and special advisers.

Events - connecting

- Welsh Connection 2003 a big success, with Derek Wanless as keynote speaker.
- Convened two Chatham House meetings with senior NHS Wales and political figures to highlight members' views.
- Free event for members in May on Wales-England issues - In bed with an elephant.
- Free event for members on Wanless in July.
- Organised Celtic dinner in Birmingham for Welsh delegates to UK conference.
- Arranged visit for members to attend Celtic workshop in Belfast.

Shaping the media debate

- Secured in-depth press features on the future role of hospitals, the future of primary care, and information and IT.
- Engaged media interest in working time directive and gained wide coverage on BBC Wales Today and Radio Wales.
- Highlighted chronic disease in articles, letters and editorials in Western Mail and Daily Post.
- Provided journalists with material from members which was then used in positive news stories.
- Briefed UK trade press such as Health Service Journal on health issues in Wales.
- Held regular private briefings with senior journalists to help inform their coverage of health issues.

Influencing the policy debate

- Submitted policy comment on: Mental Health Bill, mental health user provisions, smoking in public places, new leadership organisation, health and social care interface, restructuring of NHS department, impact of foundation trusts, balanced scorecard, diagnostic strategy.
- Ensured fairer coverage for members by influencing Audit Commission report, Transforming Healthcare in Wales.
- Represented members' views in the Wanless implementation process.
- Promoted the importance of Informing Healthcare by staging the launch event.
- Met with top team at new Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (CHAi).
- Developing strong relationships with partner organisations in Wales, including the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Industry Group.
- Secured a voice for Wales within Europe by taking a place on the UK delegation of the Hospitals Committee for Europe.
- Participating in National Assembly's Forward Broadband programme.

Other services to members

- Distributed regular Bulletins keeping members informed of our work.
- Represented members' interests within the GMS contract implementation process.
- Ensured that Welsh members are briefed on the impending pharmacy contract.
- Researched and wrote a review of the development and achievements of LHBs.
- Set up an alliance of health organisations to develop together a picture of how health will look in 2015, so that there is a national picture to support the changes being delivered locally by members.

Looking to 2005

In 2005-06 we are planning to focus on areas such as expanding our programme of events, and supporting board development. We also plan to extend the information we provide to members, and to continue highlighting the need to change the way services are delivered.

Following our 2004 annual conference an early priority will be to survey members for their views on how best the Welsh NHS Confederation can support them. The results of this will then help to shape our business plan for 2005-06, so that our services meet the needs of members.

Our team



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The Welsh NHS Confederation represents the organisations making up the NHS in Wales. All trusts and local health boards are members. We are part of the UK-wide NHS Confederation.

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CODE 001 Registered Charity no. 1090329

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