



bulletin

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Bulletin is a regular update for members on the work being carried out by the Welsh NHS Confederation on their behalf. It complements *Interchange Alert*, published by our London office, which gives members an overview of the Confederation's work at UK-wide level. If you have any queries about either publication, please contact kevin.sullivan@confed.wales.nhs.uk.

"Landmark" GMS contract released

The new GMS contract, described by NHS Confederation chief executive Gill Morgan as a "landmark in the development of general practice", was published on Wednesday 26th February. Produced after 18 months of negotiation, the document has now been sent to all GPs, who will be balloted on it over the next few weeks. Results are expected in mid-April. Richard Thomas said: "The new contract represents the biggest change in primary care since the foundation of the NHS, and it will have profound implications right across the service. Supporting members as they implement it is a key priority for us. The National Assembly is leading on implementation, and we will be working closely with them, for example by taking part in the project board chaired by Bob Hudson. We will also be linking with Confederation colleagues across the UK to ensure that Welsh members get the benefit of all the support available. And of course in our ongoing influencing work we will be continuing to make the same points about the importance of supporting LHBs on this key issue as we made face-to-face with Jane Hutt and other assembly members on Wednesday".

Providing members with the information they need: the GMS roadshow report

To help ensure members were fully briefed on the contract as quickly as possible, the Welsh NHS Confederation organised two roadshows in conjunction with the National Assembly. These were held in Cardiff on 3 March and Llandudno on 4 March. Around 120 delegates attended in total, with every LHB from across Wales represented along with trust, health authority and National Assembly representatives. Eleri de Gilbert, chief executive of Mansfield PCT and a member of the Confederation team leading the negotiations, gave a

step-by-step briefing on the contract Bob Hudson, chief executive of Gwent Health Authority and chair of the Assembly's GMS implementation project, outlined the wider context to the contract in Wales, and set out the plans for implementation. Katie Norton, chief executive of Neath Port Talbot LHB gave the Cardiff audience a front-line perspective, with Dr Gwyn Roberts, chair of Wrexham LHB, doing the same at the North Wales event. Richard Thomas said: "We were very pleased that we could offer current members and LHBs this opportunity to get up to speed on this vital issue. Our thanks go to the speakers and to the National Assembly for their support. We will be contacting members soon with further details of our activity around the contract". The contract itself and the presentation given by Eleri de Gilbert are available at www.nhsconfed.org/gmscontract

Face-to-face discussions with ministers and AMs

As part of our programme of influencing work, we met with around 20 assembly members at Cardiff Bay on 5 March, including Health Minister Jane Hutt and Deputy Health Minister Dr Brian Gibbons. This work was part of 'Manifesto Day', an event which brought together a range of health and voluntary organisations. It provided an ideal opportunity to meet and influence ministers and assembly members from all parties in advance of the Assembly elections in May.

The event proved a tremendous success, allowing important issues to be raised on behalf of members, face-to-face with politicians and officials. As well as the health minister Jane Hutt and her deputy Brian Gibbons, Richard Thomas and the management team were able to represent members' views to, amongst others, Edwina Hart, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities,

Kirsty Williams, chair of the Health and Social Services Committee, and assembly members Helen Mary Jones from Plaid Cymru, and Glyn Davies from the Conservatives.

Key issues that we raised during the day were:

- The need to ensure that Local Health Boards are well supported by the Welsh Assembly Government in implementing the new GMS contract
- The vital role of management in delivering high-quality patient care
- The critical role of information systems, electronic health records and ICT provision
- The importance of continuing to build core capacity across the service

The management team will be following up on the success of 'Manifesto Day' by sending ministers and assembly members a range of our policy comment papers, and developing other links to ensure that the voice of members continues to be heard at all levels of government.

New management committee to give equal voice to LHBs

The current management committee met for the last time on Thursday 13 March, before the new arrangements come into effect, reflecting the changes to the structure of NHS Wales. Subject to the majority of Local Health Boards joining the Welsh NHS Confederation, the new management committee will be made up of six trust and six LHB representatives, two from each of the three regions. Director Richard Thomas said: "It is right that LHBs have an equal voice at the heart of the Confederation, and we look forward to welcoming trust and new LHB representatives on to the new committee"

At the final meeting of the current committee, the Chairman Lloyd FitzHugh and Director Richard Thomas thanked the outgoing members for their commitment and contribution to the work of the Welsh NHS Confederation over a number of years. These are past Welsh Confederation chairs Fiona Peel, Ian Kelsall, Margret Price and Hugh Thomas, as well as Denis Jessopp, David Durham, Dr Ainsley Reid, Dr Mike Robinson, David Hands, Judith Paget, Bob Hudson, Gren Kershaw, Paul Williams, and co-opted members Russell Hopkins and Don Page.

Defending NHS management in the media

On 11-12 February we carried out a range of media activities in response to the publication of the Incomes Data Services (IDS) report into the pay of NHS Trust chief executives across the UK. One of its findings was that Wales was the area with the highest average salary. The Welsh media all picked up on this, and it was a far bigger story in Wales than anywhere else in the UK. Director Richard Thomas was interviewed live on BBC and HTV, and our comments were also picked up in news bulletins on TV, radio and on-line. Our key messages were that Welsh trusts were on average bigger and more complex than English trusts, that a Guardian survey showed how trust chief executives' pay was a quarter of what was paid for comparable jobs in the private sector, and that management was part of the solution in the NHS, not part of the problem.

Information Matters – new policy paper released

Investment in information is an investment in patient care, and ringfenced funding of around 4% of budget will be needed to deliver the exciting vision set out in Informing Healthcare. These are the key messages in a new policy paper released by the Welsh NHS Confederation this week. Based on our response to the Informing Healthcare consultation, and endorsing the Wanless report's emphasis on the importance of investing in information, it has been produced to help ensure that information issues are at the top of the agenda. The timing is particularly important as the National Assembly is likely to debate information and IT issues in the next few weeks.

Dates for your diary:

Welsh Connection 2003, Welsh NHS Confederation annual conference

Hilton Hotel, Cardiff, 13-14 November

Register your interest now - info@confed.wales.nhs.uk

Connecting 2003, NHS Confederation UK conference
Glasgow, 25-27 June

To book for the conference go to

www.nhsconfed.org/connecting.

The Celtic dinner this year will be on 25 June. For details contact Sandra Cummings on 01656 753028

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