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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@welshconfed.org

Representing members' views with ministers and advisers

Over the past few weeks we have been taking forward members' views in meetings with key ministerial special advisers. Our aim has been to ensure that they all understand the scale of the challenge facing members in this time of such enormous change, and to underline the need for political support for members as they implement these changes. It was agreed by all parties that these meetings were an important part of the dialogue between the Confederation and government and that they should continue on a very regular basis. Our established meetings with ministers also continue, and in May we will be meeting Jane Hutt and deputy minister John Griffiths. This provides us with a golden opportunity to ensure that members' views are heard at the heart of government.

Building links with Welsh MPs

We have agreed, following our latest discussion with Ministerial Special Advisors, that we should strengthen further our links with the Welsh MPs. Our aims will be to provide MPs with regular briefings on topical health issues, and to ensure members' views are heard in Westminster as well as in Wales.

Visiting members in North Wales

Director Mike Ponton recently visited member organisations in North Wales, spending 2 days with LHB and trust members and attending

the North Wales Local Health Board and Trust Chairs' and Chief Executives' meeting. We are very aware that the Confederation is in business to serve its members. So a key part of the Director's job is to meet with members, on their own patch, to listen to their views on the issues that concern them, and on what the Confederation can do to support them. The discussions with members in north Wales have been extremely useful, and Mike is now arranging to visit members across Wales.

Working with Wales-England differences – Book now for free event on 25 May

What are the differences between health policy in Wales and England? How big an impact do these differences have? How do we work with the fact that patients continue to cross the borders between these differing health systems? And what can we learn on these issues from experience elsewhere in Europe? These are some of the questions that will be addressed at our forthcoming executive seminar, entitled "In Bed with an Elephant: working with policy differences between Wales and England". It takes place on Tuesday 25 May (10.30-3pm) at the Commodore Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. It will be led by Professor Brian Edwards, who has extensive experience of the NHS in Wales and England and wide-ranging expertise of health systems and cross-border issues across Europe. This event has a maximum of 50 places. Until 11 May we will guarantee 1 free place to every member organisation. Thereafter, bookings will be accepted on a first come first served basis. For a booking form contact sandra.cummings@welshconfed.org (02920 504090)



The Welsh Connection 2004 – 25-26 November: John Humphrys and David Moffett confirmed

This year's Welsh Connection conference is on the theme of making change happen. With Llandudno conference centre providing us with a larger venue, we are expecting to attract even more than the 200 capacity audience we drew last year. Confirmed speakers so far include:

- **John Humphrys**, Cardiff-born presenter of the BBC Today programme, who will be speaking about health, politics and the media.
- **David Moffett**, chief executive of the Welsh Rugby Union, who will be talking about how to drive through unpopular but much-needed change in a cherished Welsh institution.

Break-out sessions will look in detail at topical health issues. The conference dinner takes place on 25 November, with John Humphrys as our guest speaker. Booking forms will be produced in the next few weeks but to register your interest with us now please contact us on info@welshconfed.org (02920 504090)

Events planned on Wanless and inspection - watch this space

We are currently planning possible events for early July on Wanless implementation, and for September on inspection. We will publicise details of these as soon as possible.

UK Confed annual conference 23-25 June, Birmingham

The theme for this year's event is "Real Leadership: tough choices, difficult decisions", with 3 days of plenary and strand sessions on issues such as leadership dilemmas and managing the business. Delegates are booking in at a faster rate than ever, with over 1500 places already sold, so Welsh members are strongly encouraged to book their places as soon as possible. The conference takes place at the International Convention Centre in the heart of Birmingham city centre. For information and booking details go to www.nhsconfed.org/annualconference

Celtic dinner 23 June – Book pronto for Vino, Tapas and Salsa dancers!

The Celtic dinner this year has a Spanish flavour! So why not come and spend midsummer's evening Spanish style, with wine, tasty tapas, and salsa dancers to entertain you. The dinner is at La Tasca Tapas restaurant in the centre of Birmingham. We have already received many advance enquiries about this year's dinner so we advise members to book as early as possible. To book contact sandra.cummings@welshconfed.org (02920 504090)

Confed at Labour Party conference

The Welsh Confed was represented at the recent Labour Party conference in Llandudno. Given that health is such a topical issue in political debate, our stand and literature attracted significant interest from delegates. Policy manager Jonathan Davies said: "The conference is a key part of our efforts to raise the profile of the Confederation. The stand acts as a real focus, and it gave us an opportunity to discuss health issues and raise members' views face-to-face with Jane Hutt, deputy minister John Griffiths, other Assembly members and MPs".

Media work on key issues

As part of our efforts to create the climate for change, Mike Ponton wrote in the Western Mail in support of the BMA's call for a radical reappraisal of the way in which services are provided. He underlined that preserving the status quo was not an option and said that "although change can often be difficult, it is a golden opportunity to deliver a twenty-first century healthcare system for the people of Wales". We also encouraged media interest in the issues raised by the European Working Time Directive. In an interview on BBC's Good Morning Wales programme, policy and public affairs manager Kevin Sullivan emphasised that this was a key driver for change across the service in Wales.

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