



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@welshconfed.org

Political links - influencing the influencers

Meeting politicians in Westminster and Wales has been a key feature of our work in the past few weeks. Members have consistently indicated that influencing on their behalf is the key role of the Confederation, and politicians are a key audience for us, as decision-makers but also as opinion-formers. Our meetings provide us with an opportunity to raise members' views, and also to try and influence politicians' thinking to help shape the wider debate about health issues in Wales. A next step is to build links with Welsh MEPs at Brussels, but below are the main points from recent meetings in Wales and Westminster:

• Briefing MPs – Plaid and Liberal Democrats

We recently went to Westminster to meet with MPs from Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrats, to brief them on issues facing members in Wales. The Plaid MPs were Adam Price and Hywel Williams and the Liberal Democrats were Lembit Opik and Roger Williams. It was an opportunity for us to outline the scale of the agenda facing members in Wales, and to listen to their views on subjects such as mental health and the future shape of the service in Wales. We said that in our view they had a very important role to play in the debate about health issues in Wales, especially given the changes under way in the light of Wanless. We have therefore agreed to continue providing them with briefings and to meet them again. We have now met with all three of the political parties who have MPs in Welsh seats at Westminster. Our next step is to strengthen these contacts and develop similar relationships with Welsh members of the House of Lords.

• Meeting with Rhodri Morgan and Jane Hutt

The meeting we had requested with the First Minister took place on 13 October, with Jane Hutt, Ann Lloyd, finance director Christine Daws and special adviser Mark Drakeford also present. We told the First Minister that members remained committed to improving services and implementing the Wanless agenda, but we underlined the many different issues that members are having to face simultaneously. We discussed the increase in funding for NHS Wales which had been announced in the budget the previous day. We said that we needed to study the proposals in detail and would be looking not just for an overall percentage growth in the budget, but for the real growth that was needed to meet rising public expectations on service improvement and development. We cautiously welcomed the £200 million for capital expenditure, with the caveat that further significant capital investment was needed by the Service. We also described our work in engaging MPs and the media to generate a better informed public debate on the challenges faced by the NHS and its partners. The meeting was constructive and cordial and the First Minister has offered to meet with us again.

• Briefing Assembly health spokespeople

We also met recently with the health spokespeople from the three opposition parties in Cardiff Bay: Liberal Democrat Kirsty Williams, Conservative Jonathan Morgan and Plaid Cymru's Rhodri Glyn Thomas. Issues raised included waiting times, chronic and long-term conditions, and the importance of setting out a clear vision for the future of the NHS in Wales.



Conference - mental health session confirmed

Commissioning mental health services is an issue of concern to many members. With this in mind, we can now confirm that one of our parallel sessions at the conference will look at this issue. Our speaker will be Professor Chris Thompson, who is currently the Director of Healthcare Services at Priory Group. Previously he was the Professor of Psychiatry and Dean of the Medical School at the University of Southampton.

We will be circulating further details of this and other sessions as soon as possible, plus details of how to reserve your place in advance. A few places at the conference are still available, but we strongly advise you to book your place as soon as possible if you have not yet done so. Download details of the conference and the booking form at www.nhsconfed.org/wales or contact us on 02920 504090.

Shaping the media debate – the future role of hospitals

As part of our efforts to influence the media debate about the future of health services in Wales, we recently secured a feature article in the Western Mail on the future role of the hospital. Written by health editor Madeleine Brindley, but with contributions from trust members, the article outlined the pressures facing hospitals and argued that changes to the role they play within the wider health system were inevitable. Features like this, in our view, can play a key role in creating the climate for change. A similar feature on the future of primary care will appear in the same paper in early November. We are also briefing journalists from across Wales on issues to be highlighted at our conference in Llandudno.

From Brussels to the Bay: Sue Blackhurst joins Welsh Confed team

We are very pleased to welcome to our team Sue Blackhurst, who has recently joined us as our office co-ordinator. Sue, who hails originally from Bognor Regis, has recently moved to Wales from Brussels. She will be the central point of contact at our office and brings a much-needed boost to our capacity at a time when our work is growing enormously. In particular she will be supporting Sandra Cummings in developing our events programme.

Pharmacy contract

Pharmacists are to be balloted on a new contract, and the results are likely to be known at the end of November. The contract, which covers England and Wales, has been negotiated between the NHS Confederation and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, representing pharmacists. We have sent out to all members in Wales a briefing which explains the key points of the new contract. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy. If the vote goes in favour of the new contract, we are also planning to hold an event and produce further briefings looking at implementation of the new contract.

Welsh NHS Confederation awards – thanks for the entries

We received a record response this year and the judging process is now under way. The award, organised in collaboration with Glaxo SmithKline, will be presented to the winner by the First Minister at our conference on **25 November**. We will keep all entrants informed of progress.

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