



# bulletin

## Welsh Connection 2004 – conference special report

6 DECEMBER 2004

ISSUE 31

**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](mailto:kevin.sullivan@welshconfed.org)

### Record audience for The Welsh Connection 2004

Over 300 senior figures from across the health field gathered in Llandudno on 25-26 November to attend *The Welsh Connection 2004*, the Welsh Confederation's annual conference. This year's conference was by far the biggest to date, with delegate numbers up by 50% and exhibitors up by 400% on last year. It remains the biggest NHS Confederation event anywhere in the UK, apart from the national conference. Every member organisation of the Welsh NHS Confederation was represented, with delegates also drawn from the commercial and voluntary sector, from local government, and from NHS organisations across the border in England. Opening the event, chairman Lloyd FitzHugh said that the conference theme of *"radical change, tough choices"* reflected the key issue facing NHS Wales: how to deliver much-needed change whilst retaining the confidence and support of NHS staff, politicians and the wider public. This issue of bulletin picks out some of the highlights of the conference.

### David Moffett – avoid the soft option and don't wait for consensus

The soft option is always the wrong option, said Welsh Rugby Union Chief Executive David Moffett in his thought-provoking speech on *"Managing Change in a Hostile Environment"*. Drawing on his recent experience of making controversial changes in Welsh rugby, he said that what was needed in the NHS in his view was

*"not a step change, not an incremental change but big bang change"*. Much of this involved doing things more simply, he argued, underlining the need to focus on just 4 or 5 overall strategic goals and to avoid getting bogged down in *"over-academic"* approaches. He suggested that seeking universal consensus for change would mean that the change would never happen, arguing that leadership involved taking decisions that not everyone could support. He also called for Wales to follow its own approach to health issues, and emphasised the importance of improving health, calling for sport to be made central to health policy and debate.



David Moffett urging delegates to get out of their *"comfort zone"*



## Gill Morgan – Wales and the UK-wide picture

In her address, which was very well-received by delegates, NHS Confederation UK chief executive Gill Morgan outlined some of the issues which are affecting the NHS elsewhere in the UK, as well as in Wales. Public health, pharmacy and workforce issues were three of the examples she mentioned, adding that primary care in particular was being transformed. She said that her message to Wales was to focus on clear priorities for influencing the debate, to continue to build strategic partnerships for change, and in all things to remember the patient.

## The politicians' view – Rhodri Morgan and Jane Hutt

In his keynote address, the First Minister set out his vision for public services in Wales, based on what he called the "collaborative approach: working together, working smarter". He contrasted this emphasis on building effective relationships with the market model, which he said served to fragment the health community into competing parts. He said that the market model does not work for Wales, not least because it required choice, which is simply not an option in many parts of Wales. He also congratulated the NHS in Wales on the "steady progress" which he said was being made on reducing long waiting times. Commenting on the recent release of the English white paper on public health, Health Minister Jane Hutt said that she was pleased to see that it followed the lead given by Wales, putting public health at the heart of the debate. The entries for the awards scheme this year showed how much innovative work was going on in Wales, she said, highlighting in particular the shortlisted entries which showed how partnership working at local level was already making a difference for patients.



Rhodri Morgan giving the keynote address

## Taking services to where the patients are – Welsh ambulance service win 2004 award for innovation

A treatment centre set up in Swansea city centre to deal with the heavy demand from the pub and club quarter on key dates such as Christmas and New Year has won the 2004 award for innovation. The award, supported by GlaxoSmithKline, received a record 72 entries from all parts of Wales. First Minister Rhodri Morgan presented the award to Mark Winter, who devised the scheme, on behalf of the ambulance services trust. He also congratulated the runners-up: Swansea Trust for their pioneering lymphoedema clinic, and Pembrokeshire Trust for their new health and social care resource centre.

*"We are delighted. The scheme is making a big difference not only in releasing pressure on the ambulance service in Swansea town centre during one of its busiest times, but ensuring we provide the right treatment at the right time for patients, meaning fewer are needing to be taken to hospital."*

Don Page Ambulance Trust Chief Executive

Working with colleagues at the ambulance trust, we helped secure widespread press coverage across Wales and in the UK-wide media. This is continuing, but so far it has included:

- The Daily Mail
- BBC Radio Five Live
- BBC Breakfast News
- BBC News 24
- BBC Wales Today
- Swansea Sound and The Wave
- The Daily Post
- Wrexham Leader
- South Wales Evening Post
- The Publican magazine
- The Sunday Express
- BBC Radio One
- BBC London
- Radio Wales
- ITV Wales
- South Wales Echo
- Western Mail
- Wrexham Mail
- Red Dragon Radio

The 9 shortlisted entries are featured in our publication "Changing for the Better". Please contact us if you wish to receive a copy. This publication, and a document containing all 72 entries, is available on our new website – [www.nhsconfed.org](http://www.nhsconfed.org)

## John Humphrys – take your good news to the media, as they won't come looking for it

Don't expect the media to come to you looking for good news about the health service, said veteran BBC broadcaster and journalist John Humphrys in a question and answer session. Responding to questions from the audience about getting better coverage for positive news stories about the NHS, he made clear that in his view the onus would always be on the health service, not on the media. He said that the NHS suffered from a perception problem, adding that research showed that people with direct experience of the NHS are much more favourable towards it than the public in general. One way of addressing this was to engage more with the media, he said, and to talk in an open, honest and straightforward way. The importance of doing this was strongly emphasised by Ann Lloyd, Director of Health and Social Care from the Welsh Assembly Government. It was, she said, a key component of "the job facing you", which was the theme of her address to the conference.

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Delegates in the plenary session

## Conference round-up

**Parallel sessions:** these were a new feature in this year's programme. Issues covered were: telehealth, commissioning mental health services, chronic disease and long-term conditions, workforce issues, local health improvement agencies, social care and a workshop for non-executive directors and non-officer members. If you would like contact details for any of the speakers in these workshops please just let us know.

**A Picture of Health 2015:** a clear picture of how health in Wales would look in 2015 was essential in helping to show where the changes currently under way were leading. As Welsh NHS Confederation Director Mike Ponton explained, creating this picture is the objective of a group of senior health figures who have been discussing this issue over the past few months, and who reported their progress to the conference. Dr Richard Lewis from the BMA, Helen Whyley from the RCN, and Peter Johns from the Association of Community Health Councils, explained their role in the project, with Geraint Martin from the Welsh Assembly Government underlining its importance.

**Conference dinner:** 254 guests enjoyed wining and dining at the St George Hotel for the annual conference dinner, which brought together delegates, speakers and exhibitors. Director Mike Ponton took the opportunity to thank outgoing Confederation chair Lloyd FitzHugh for all his work during his term of office. BBC broadcaster John Humphrys provided the after-dinner entertainment, with some stories about some of the household names in British politics, including the sheer terror of having to interview Margaret Thatcher!



(left to right) Lloyd FitzHugh, First Minister, incoming Chair Meirion Hughes, Director Mike Ponton

## New website – [www.welshconfed.org](http://www.welshconfed.org)

Our new site is now live and gives you access to our publications and updates on our work, as well as links to other health-related sites. We have just released three new briefings which are available on the site:

- Chronic conditions: delivering the double benefit
- Information and IT: an investment in patient care
- Primary care: changing for the better

## Thank you

We would like to thank all of our delegates, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors for helping to make this year's conference a success. We will keep you informed of our work in 2005, and of course we look forward to seeing you at the Welsh Connection 2005!

Welsh Connection 2005  
2-4 November 2005  
City Hall, Cardiff  
Register your interest now – [info@welshconfed.org](mailto:info@welshconfed.org)

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