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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

Welcome to new Welsh Confederation Chair Meirion Hughes

We are delighted to welcome Meirion Hughes as the new Chair of the Welsh NHS Confederation. Meirion is Chair of Denbighshire Local Health Board and has also had extensive experience in local government.

"I am very pleased to be taking on this role at what is a very important time for the NHS in Wales. With so many changes and pressures facing us all, having the Confederation as a single united voice for all NHS organisations in Wales is crucial. With my predecessor Lloyd FitzHugh at the helm, the profile and influence of the Confederation has increased enormously. I am determined that we should all work together to build on this success, ensuring that the Confederation becomes even more influential and effective in its work on behalf of all of us, from all parts of the NHS and all parts of Wales."

Meirion Hughes, Chair, The Welsh NHS Confederation

New minister for health and social services - maintaining a dialogue

Following the appointment of Dr Brian Gibbons as the Minister for Health and Social Services, we have made contact with his office and have suggested meeting three times a year with him, to complement our monthly meetings with special advisers, senior officials and other key decision-makers.

Turning the corner on waiting times – responding to Auditor-General and to fall in figures

The Auditor-General's report on waiting times came out in mid-January and attracted a lot of political and press interest. We gave background briefings and official comment to journalists. We said that whilst the situation was unacceptable, the hard work of members meant that we had turned the corner on waiting times, and that these had dropped since the June 2004 figures used in the report. Proof of this came when up-to-date figures were published at the end of January, showing substantial drops, especially in long waits. We highlighted this widely with both press and politicians, underlining again the hard work of members and the need for falls in waiting times to be sustainable.

Meeting Alan Pugh and Jill Evans MEP

Our meeting with the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language takes place on 7 February, and Health Challenge Wales will be the main topic. In the same week we are also meeting with Jill Evans, MEP. We will report back on these meetings in our next issue.

South East Wales LHBs – non-officer board member development day

We are co-ordinating the arrangements for this day on *Friday 4th February* at the Parkway Hotel in Cwmbran. Speakers include: **First Minister Rhodri Morgan, Dame Rennie Fritchie, Commissioner for Public Appointments, and Paul Grace, District Auditor.** We will be considering whether to offer to stage similar events in the North Wales and South West Wales regions.



Management committee report

At the committee meeting on 27 January, Meirion Hughes welcomed new committee members Alison Cowell, Chair of Conwy LHB, and Margret Price, Chair of Carmarthenshire Trust. Key topics discussed included:

- **Executive group** - Judith Paget, Chief Executive of Caerphilly LHB, and Hilary Stevens, Chair of Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust, were nominated as members of this group, joining Chairman Meirion Hughes and an additional trust representative. The purpose of this group, as approved at our AGM in November, is to advise on urgent business decisions or policy issues that need resolution between committee meetings.
- **Draft business plan endorsed** - the plan sets out the Confederation's proposed activity for 2005-6, in the context of growing demands on our resources due to our higher profile, and a tighter financial climate. The plan will be incorporated into the UK Confederation business plan and details will be available once finalised.
- **Waiting times** - in the wake of the Auditor-General's report and other political and press interest, the committee agreed that the Confederation should be seen to be presenting solutions to the problem, giving concrete proposals to the new minister. We will be putting these together in the next few weeks and would welcome any input from members (kevin.sullivan@welshconfed.org).

Pharmacy contract – free member event: 7th February

This sell-out event is taking place at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, organised by the Confederation in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government. Speakers include **Chris Town**, who led the NHS Confederation negotiating team on the contract.

A Picture of Health 2015 – vision for the future

We recently met the other parties involved in these discussions (including senior doctors, nurses, local government, patient representative groups, and public health professionals) and are now about to finalise our vision of how the health system will look in 2015. We will be launching it in the next few weeks and will contact members with details as soon as possible.

Future role and development of LHBs

We are working with LHB Chairs and Chief Executives to review the development and achievements of LHBs over the last eighteen months. This project will create a snapshot of LHB's progress in meeting the original expectations of the Welsh Assembly Government and to identify their continuing development needs. The final report is likely to be available in early spring 2005.

Member survey – thanks for your replies

At the end of 2004 we sent a short survey to Chairs and Chief Executives to gauge their views on our priorities. Of our current areas of work, the most important priority identified by members was briefing and influencing decision-makers. Top of the proposed new areas of work was training and development for non-executive directors and non-officer members. We have used these findings to inform our planning for 2005-6.

Healthy and Wealthy? Health and the Welsh Economy

A one-day conference organised by the Bevan Foundation think-tank. *Friday 25th February*. Park Thistle Hotel Cardiff. Main speakers include **Dr Brian Gibbons** and **Andrew Davies, Economic Development Minister** (info@bevanfoundation.org 01495 725214).

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