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Member's Update Issue 6 24 July 2002

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.

Primary Care - Confed influencing key political debates

On Tuesday 16th of July the Welsh NHS Confederation launched its policy document on Primary Care. This document was widely distributed amongst Assembly Members from all political parties in advance of the Health and Social Services Committee discussing the Primary Care Action Plan on Wednesday the 17th. The success of this launch can be measured by the fact that during the course of the meeting both the Minister, Jane Hutt, and the Opposition spokesperson for health, Dr Dai Lloyd, referred to the policy document and gave support to key messages contained within it.

Our headline message is that a strong primary care sector should be at the heart of a strong NHS and of the whole health system. Strengthening primary care has to include increasing capacity, spreading best practice, and developing the primary care team as the basic building block. The immediate priorities were about getting the basics right - workforce, premises and IT in particular.

Director Richard Thomas said:

"It is reassuring that both the Welsh Assembly Government and the opposition parties appear to be listening to and taking account of the key messages that are coming out from our membership. It shows that we can provide an effective voice for primary care organisations, and that our voice is listened to by policy-makers"

To download our document go to www.nhsconfed.org/wales/policies or contact us for a copy on info@confed.wales.nhs.uk

GP contract – how to make your voice heard

Negotiations on a new GMS contract, led by the NHS Confederation on behalf of the 4 health departments across the UK, are now entering the second and more detailed phase. The second phase of talks will focus on issues such as cost. It gets under way in the wake of the recent ballot of GPs showing that they approved the contract framework by a majority of three to one. The Welsh Confed is very keen to ensure that members in Wales are fully engaged in this process, so that the negotiations take into account their needs and circumstances. Working groups are being set up on different areas covered by the new contract, and we are contacting members to identify Welsh representatives. A special section of the Confederation website has been set up to give members the latest information on the negotiations – go to www.nhsconfed.org/gmscontract. If you have views on any of the areas covered by the contract, we strongly encourage you to pass your comments to us so that they can be fed into the negotiating team. Please send your comments to carolyn.jones@nhsconfed.org

Places going fast for Annual Conference – members urged to book now

"The Welsh Connection 2002 – management learning across boundaries" – Cardiff 7-8 November 2002. Booking forms were sent to members last week and places are already starting to go fast. On Monday 29 July we will be opening the bookings to non-members. Members who have not already booked are strongly advised to do so by Friday 26 July to avoid disappointment. If you need another booking form go to www.nhsconfed.org/wales and click on the conference link. Or contact us on 01656 7530328 or info@confed.wales.nhs.uk



Audit Commission review of public services in Wales – Confed responds

The Audit Commission published last week its long-awaited report on public services in Wales, which provides a "stocktake" of the progress made by the NHS and local government against the policy agenda being mapped out by the National Assembly. We welcomed the report as a useful review of progress, though we underlined that modernising the NHS in Wales was a long-term project involving considerable challenges: we cannot make up overnight all the ground lost through decades of underinvestment in capacity and infrastructure. We also underlined that we were pleased to see examples of good practice by member organisations included in the report.

Management committee update

At the recent meeting of the Welsh Confederation's management committee, subjects included:

- **Preparing the Welsh NHS Confederation for 2003** - a range of preparatory work is under way, including remodelling of subscriptions, amending the constitution to take account of the structural changes in NHS Wales, and continuing with our strategy to recruit the new Local Health Boards.
- **Structural change implementation** - we will be seeking a meeting with Jane Hutt to discuss issues arising out of the new structures.
- **Briefing politicians in Wales and Westminster** - developing this further will be a priority in the coming months, through our forthcoming Political Briefing publication, as well as through meetings and other contacts.

The committee welcomed as new members Fiona Peel, chair of Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust, and Dr Ainsley Reid, from Dyfed Powys Health Authority.

Confed influencing on IT – your views sought

We are planning a campaign to underline the critical importance of IT in delivering the modernisation agenda in NHS Wales. We will be conducting this in anticipation of the Assembly's forthcoming IT strategy, and in the wake of the Wanless report conclusion that the cost of not having a modern IT infrastructure is enormous. The aim will be to get across our key messages to politicians, policy-makers and the media, enlisting the support of other organisations where possible.

We are very keen to ensure that our messages are anchored in members' views. So if you have any comments which you would like to feed in to our policy on the key issue of IT please contact us - jonathan.davies@confed.wales.nhs.uk