

Prescription for Health 2011





Foreword

Prescription for Health 2011 is the Welsh NHS Confederation's contribution to the post-election debate on health and health policy in Wales. As the organisation that represents the seven Health Boards and three Trusts in Wales, the Welsh NHS Confederation recognises the importance of engaging with the National Assembly for Wales and the newly-elected Welsh Government.

At the start of the fourth Assembly in Wales the NHS faces many challenges and changes. Health is a key devolved policy area and will, no doubt, figure large on the new Government's agenda. On behalf of our members, the Welsh NHS Confederation commits to playing a full part in engaging with the new Government and with politicians from all parties to help improve the NHS for everyone in Wales.

Helen Birtwhistle

Director, Welsh NHS Confederation

NHS Wales today

As we settle into the post-election period and the new Government is formed, there is general recognition that improvements have been made in the NHS in Wales in recent years. For example:-

- Patients in Wales come into contact with the NHS some 22 million times every year. Surveys show that the vast majority of patients are pleased with their experience.
- The 1000 Lives Campaign, which saved an additional 1199 extra lives between 2008 and 2010, has put patient safety at the top of the healthcare agenda in Wales.
- Five years ago there were lengthy waits for hospital treatment – now the majority of people are treated within 26 weeks.
- Death rates from coronary heart disease in Wales continue to fall.
- Scientific breakthroughs and quicker referrals for treatment mean diseases that would have been untreatable many years ago – such as various cancers – are now able to be managed with improved survival rates as people learn to live with their conditions.





Why does the NHS need to change?

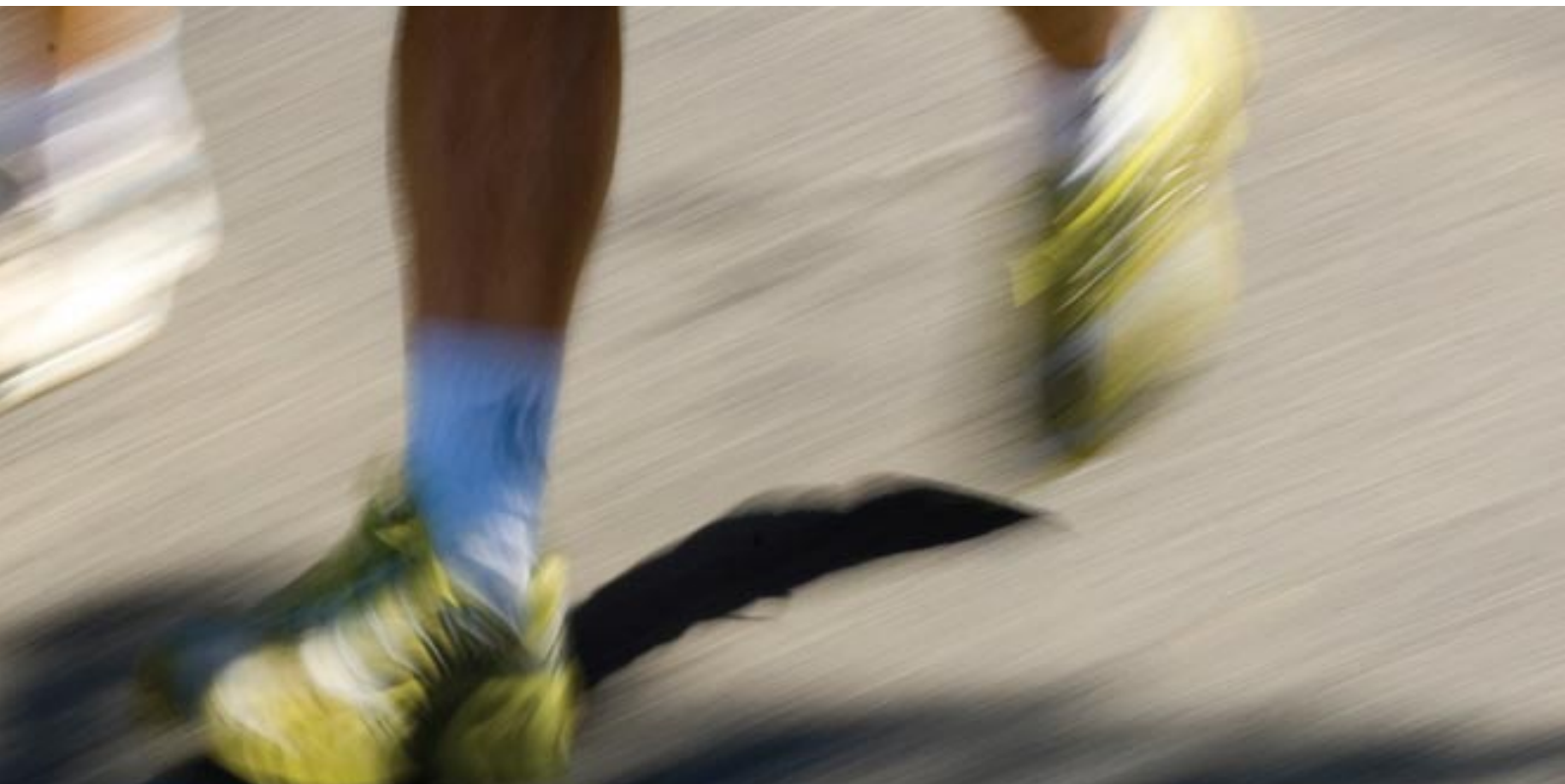
It is clear that 2011 is a defining moment for the NHS in Wales. The resources available are expected to be very tight for the foreseeable future. If the NHS is to continue to improve it needs to transform – and change how services are delivered to patients

Wales as a nation has to come together and decide what sort of health service we want and can afford. The NHS in Wales faces several challenges in the coming years: -

- One of the most significant is the growing number of older people in Wales. Census data tells us that, by 2031, the number of people over 75 will have increased by 75% since 2001.
- Already a third of adults in Wales have at least one chronic condition, such as asthma, diabetes or arthritis. Older people are more likely to have a long-term, chronic illness so an increasing elderly population means that the number of people needing treatment for such conditions will also rise.
- Another issue is that once-untreatable conditions are now more manageable and people are living longer. Although this is a success story of 60 years of the National Health Service, it puts an increasing pressure on health services.

- The NHS needs to continue – and accelerate – the move from being primarily a ‘sickness’ service, which treats people when they become ill, to a ‘wellness’ service that helps people stay healthy and prevents sickness.
- We already have a strong base on which to increase the quality and amount of care provided in the community, thanks to the network of GP, pharmacy and nursing services in every part of Wales. What we need to get away from is the perception that the hospital is the best place to receive NHS services to a situation where primary care is seen to be as important as hospital care.
- Drugs and treatments for many conditions are expensive. The high and rising costs of certain medicines, especially some types of cancer treatments, mean that prescribed drugs present a continuing cost issue for the NHS. In this context, prevention and health promotion are increasingly important.
- Mental health has risen up the agenda and progress is being made to improve standards of care. The focus now needs to be maintained to ensure mental health remains a priority.
- Patients expect better and quicker access to services, and more of them. Many people also want to play a more active role in the planning and delivery of their own care.
- NHS Wales has many old buildings, which either need substantial capital investment or are not appropriate for a modern healthcare service. In some cases the best option is to close or change a facility and provide services elsewhere and in different ways.

Given these challenges, the need to change the way healthcare services are delivered is both necessary and unavoidable. But this need for change also offers opportunities to work differently and to provide better healthcare for the people of Wales.



How can the public help the NHS achieve change?

The NHS was founded on the principles of equality of access and freedom from payment at the point of use. As part of the right to receive treatment, each individual should be encouraged and helped to take responsibility in respect of their health and well-being.

The prevalence of lifestyle related illness in Wales provides ample evidence that many people do not take care of themselves.

The sheer scale of the obesity epidemic in Wales demonstrates why we need a new approach. For example, 57% of the adult population is overweight or obese, which increases the risk of developing a whole host of diseases. These have implications for a person's quality of life as well as having a considerable financial impact on the NHS and the wider economy.

Patient responsibility is also needed in the use of prescribed medicines. It is estimated that between 30% and 50% of patients fail to take their medicines correctly. This often results in unnecessary hospital admissions, which cost the NHS in Wales almost £10million a year. On top of this, prescriptions which are dispensed but never taken cost the NHS in Wales almost £50 million a year in wasted medicines.

The NHS needs the people of Wales to start taking greater responsibility for their health and well-being. This will, in time, help to relieve the increasing pressure on the NHS, its staff and its budgets. It will also lead to a fitter, more active and healthier population.

How can our politicians help the NHS achieve change?

Politicians have an important role in helping the public to understand why health services need to change. The NHS cannot provide every type of healthcare service in every hospital – there simply aren't enough qualified health professionals or money.

However, the NHS can, and must, ensure that high quality, safe services are available to everyone. This will require highly specialised care and treatments to be provided in fewer, better-equipped centres of excellence, for instance. At the same time, people will no longer have to travel for other services such as diagnostic blood tests or X-rays which could be provided in more local community-based facilities, or even in a patient's own home.

The terms 'joint working' and 'working in partnership' are often heard as new governments form. It is vital for the newly elected Government of Wales to prioritise the move towards making joint working between health and social care the norm.

With an ageing population and a growing demand for longer-term care, strong leadership is needed to bring adult health and social care services closer together. Pooling resources and creating joint ways of measuring whether combined services are working well – for instance by supporting a person with a chronic condition in their own home - would put the focus firmly on the needs of the patient.



Conclusion

There was cross-party support for the findings of the Wanless review in 2003, which concluded that the current way of providing health services was unsustainable. We now need to see across the board support for transformational change not just in principle, but in practice.

There will inevitably need to be some tough decisions taken about healthcare. And change, any change, is rarely popular.

The NHS in Wales is dedicated to working with the nation's sixty Assembly Members, and with the new Government, to continue the development of a modern, safe, quality health service which meets the ever-changing needs of the people we serve.

NHS Wales - An Overview

The NHS now delivers services through 7 Health Boards and three NHS Trusts in Wales.

Health Boards

The 7 Local Health Boards in Wales are now responsible for all of the different types of healthcare in their area. They plan, secure and deliver healthcare services, replacing the 22 LHBs and the 7 NHS Trusts which together performed these functions separately in the past.

The Local Health Boards are: -

- Aneurin Bevan Health Board
- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- Hywel Dda Health Board
- Cwm Taf Health Board
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
- Powys Teaching Health Board

NHS Trusts

There are currently 3 NHS Trusts in Wales with an all - Wales focus. These are: -

- Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust. This trust provides pre-hospital emergency care and treatment throughout Wales.
- Velindre NHS Trust. This trust has the following divisions and hosted units; Velindre Cancer Centre, Welsh Blood Service, Cancer Services Coordinating Group, Cardiac Networks Coordinating Group of Wales, South East Wales Cancer Network, NHS Wales Informatics Service
- Public Health Wales. Exercises the functions of the previous National Public Health Service, Wales Centre for Health, Welsh Cancer Intelligence & Surveillance Unit, Congenital Anomaly Register & Information Service for Wales, and Screening Services Wales all with a nation wide remit.

NHS Staff

NHS Wales provides public healthcare in Wales and employs some 90,000 staff, making it Wales's biggest employer. Whilst employing this number of staff it should be noted that NHS management costs account for only 3.6% of the overall health budget.

About the Welsh NHS Confederation

The Welsh NHS Confederation represents the organisations making up the NHS in Wales: local health boards and trusts. We act as a voice in the drive for better health and better health-care through our policy and influencing work, and by supporting members with events, information and training. To find out more about us go to -

www.welshconfed.org