The 2015 Challenge for NHS Wales

A briefing for General Election candidates on the challenges facing the healthcare system in Wales
Introduction

Across the UK health is a devolved matter with all four UK countries having the powers to develop legislation and policy relating to health. In preparation for the General Election a broad coalition of health and social care leaders in England, including the NHS Confederation, launched ‘The 2015 Challenge Declaration’. The Declaration describes the seven major challenges that must be addressed to ensure there is a healthcare system to be proud of in the future.

Although led by organisations in England, the Declaration also provides an opportunity for the NHS in Wales to have an honest and open debate about the challenges facing NHS Wales and the potential solutions.

Health is devolved in Wales and the direction, systems and structures are different from England, notably the NHS in Wales being integrated and working within the ethos of collaboration and not competition. However, the issues highlighted within ‘The 2015 Challenge Declaration’ are also relevant to the NHS, staff and patients in Wales and echo the challenges highlighted by the Welsh NHS Confederation’s discussion paper ‘From Rhetoric to Reality – NHS Wales in 10 years’ time,’ published in January 2014.

The challenges are not new. They have confronted us for years but they are compounded by unprecedented financial pressures on health and social care systems across the UK as the gap between demands on services and funding continues to grow. These financial pressures make change harder, and yet more urgent, which amounts to the most difficult set of circumstances faced by the NHS since its conception.

Whilst across the UK many of the issues are the same, the policy approaches to tackle them have differed. However, it appears these differences have not impacted significantly on patient outcomes. As the Nuffield Trust report into the health systems of the four nations highlighted earlier this year: “There is little sign that one country is consistently moving ahead of the others.”

As the Welsh NHS Confederation - the body representing the seven Local Health Boards and three NHS Trusts which make up the NHS in Wales - we are committed to working with our members, politicians, partners, the public, staff and patients to make the case for change in a constructive and engaged way. It is only by having an open and honest national debate about these challenges, and their solutions, that we will have a sustainable healthcare system that is fit for the future.

This briefing document is our analysis of the challenges that must be discussed and addressed at the 2015 General Election and provides an opportunity to highlight these issues in advance of the 2016 National Assembly elections. In the coming year, the Welsh NHS Confederation will be presenting possible solutions to these challenges and engaging further with political parties, stakeholders and the public to discuss these.

We hope that all political parties find this briefing helpful when engaging with the public about the challenges that NHS Wales faces.
NHS Wales – an overview

NHS Wales delivers services through seven Health Boards and three NHS Trusts. As the Nuffield Trust report recently highlighted, since devolution there have been diverging policies for healthcare in each devolved nation. In Wales there is now no internal market and free prescription drugs are provided.

Health Boards

The seven Local Health Boards in Wales are responsible for planning and securing the delivery of primary, community and secondary care services alongside specialist services for their areas. These services include dental, optical, pharmaceutical and mental health services.

The Local Health Boards are:
• Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board
• Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
• Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
• Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
• Cwm Taf University Health Board
• Hywel Dda University Health Board
• Powys teaching Health Board

NHS Trusts

There are three NHS Trusts in Wales with an all-Wales focus.

• Public Health Wales NHS Trust provides professional, independent public health advice and services to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Wales.

• Velindre NHS Trust provides a range of specialist services at local, regional and all-Wales levels, including the Welsh Blood Service and Velindre Cancer Centre.

• Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust provides pre-hospital emergency care and treatment throughout Wales. In April 2007, NHS Direct Wales, a telephone service which provides 24-hour health advice and information, became part of the Trust.

In addition Community Health Councils remain in Wales and are statutory lay bodies that represent the interests of the public in the health service in their district. The eight Community Health Councils give people an independent voice in their local NHS and the services it provides.

“In order for the NHS to be sustainable in the future we need to manage healthcare wisely.”
The 2015 Challenge

1. The need challenge
Meeting the rising demand for care, particularly from people with complex needs or long-term conditions, while maintaining people's wellbeing and preventing ill health for as long as possible.

2. The culture challenge
Building confidence in the health service by achieving a fundamental shift in culture from the bottom up. Creating a more open and transparent NHS, which enables patients, citizens and communities to be partners in decisions, and staff to improve care.

3. The design challenge
Redesigning the healthcare system to reflect the needs of people now – and so that it remains sustainable in the future. This includes shifting more care closer to people’s homes, while maintaining hospital care. There is also a focus on joining up all parts of the healthcare system so care revolves around the needs and capacities of individuals, families and communities.

4. The financial challenge
Recognising the financial pressures on all parts of the system and squeezing value from every penny of public money spent on healthcare. Being open and honest in the debate on the future levels and sources of funding for healthcare.

5. The leadership challenge
Empowering leaders to improve health and wellbeing for local people and working in partnership with a wide range of organisations to address the 2015 Challenge. Involving patients and citizens as leaders and having the resilience to make the biggest changes to healthcare in recent history.

6. The workforce challenge
Planning for a workforce to better match changing demand. Developing staff roles and skills to provide complex, multidisciplinary, coordinated care, in partnership with individuals and communities.

7. The technology challenge
Using technology to help transform care and enable people to access information and treatment in a way that meets their needs. Spreading innovation to improve the quality of care while responding to the financial challenge facing the NHS.
1. The need challenge:

Meeting the rising demand for care, particularly from people with complex needs or long-term conditions, while maintaining people’s wellbeing and preventing ill health for as long as possible.

Demand for services is rising as people are living for longer. Clearly this is something to celebrate, and is in part due to the success of the NHS and other public services, but an ageing population and longer periods of ill health mean more people need greater and increasingly complex support.

Wales currently has the highest rates of long-term limiting illness in the UK, which is the most expensive aspect of NHS care. Between 2001/02 and 2010/11 the number of people with a chronic or long-term condition in Wales increased from 105,000 to 142,000. This trend is predicted to rise in the future and by 2033 the number of people over the age of 65 in Wales is set to increase from 16% to 26%.

Alongside an ageing population, we are also faced with the challenges of inactivity. Prevalence of physical inactivity in the UK is said to cost the NHS £1.06 billion. Successfully encouraging people to become active and take responsibility for their own wellbeing could significantly reduce the pressure on NHS Wales.

The ongoing failure to prevent or delay ill health is exacerbating the rising demand for care. It is vital that there is a society-wide approach to this.

“Encouraging people to become active and take responsibility for their own wellbeing could significantly reduce the pressure on NHS Wales.”

2. The culture challenge:

Building confidence in the health service by achieving a fundamental shift in culture from the bottom up. Creating a more open and transparent NHS, which enables patients, citizens and communities to be partners in decisions, and staff to improve care.

Culture change is required to engage with the public. It is also needed in response to changes in people’s needs and aspirations and to the challenges that have affected public confidence in NHS leaders and staff. The NHS in Wales is committed to providing safe, high quality and compassionate care. Meeting patient needs with dignity and respect is the priority for NHS Wales and one that is taken extremely seriously. Most patients report that they are satisfied with the care they receive. However, when care falls short of the high standards we strive to achieve, lessons must be learned. The NHS in Wales is constantly seeking to improve.

Transparency and openness are key for patients, citizens and communities to be partners in decision making and empowering them to make informed choices about their healthcare. Research shows that engagement improves patient knowledge, experience and satisfaction. It also reduces cost through greater self-care and appropriate use of services. The My Local Health Service website is a good example of the Welsh NHS providing information to those who require it.

The Welsh NHS is now working under a new approach of prudent healthcare, where “doing the right thing at the right time” is translated into effective clinical practice which increases capacity, fits the needs and circumstances of patients and actively avoids wasteful care that is not to the patient’s benefit. A well-informed patient is an important aspect of this.

3. The design challenge:

Redesigning the healthcare system to reflect the needs of people now – and so that it remains sustainable in the future. This includes shifting more care closer to people’s homes, while maintaining hospital care. There is also a focus on joining up all parts of the healthcare system so care revolves around the needs and capacities of individuals, families and communities.

To create a sustainable NHS for the future, services must be redesigned to make sure the patient is at the centre of the care they receive. We must invest time, money and services outside of the hospital door.

When patients are involved in managing their own care and treatment, they have better outcomes, follow appropriate drug treatments, avoid over-treatment and are less likely to be hospitalised. People must have the tools to stay healthy and away from secondary care settings when they could be treated at home or in the community.
“We must invest time, money and services outside of the hospital door.”

As the Nuffield Trust report highlighted⁸: “There have been significant improvements in the performance of the four UK health systems over the past two decades… Each has invested in more hospital and community health services doctors and dentists, with reductions in inpatient admissions per doctor/dentist”. Supporting people in the community will aid in the sustainable running of the Welsh health service.

4. The financial challenge:

Recognising the financial pressures on all parts of the system and squeezing value from every penny of public money spent on healthcare. Being open and honest in the debate on the future levels and sources of funding for healthcare.

The cost of providing care is rising. The NHS now delivers a much more extensive and sophisticated range of treatments and procedures than could ever have been envisaged at its creation⁹ and delivers these services to an increasing number of citizens.

Wales is the poorest region of the whole UK.¹⁰ This poverty often contributes to poor health, and the effects of this are being compounded by welfare reform. Evidence has suggested that economic downturns lead to short and long-term health effects.¹¹

As demand has increased, finances have become more constricted for NHS Wales. Health spending is a significant percentage of the Welsh Government budget, accounting for more than 42% of its total expenditure.¹² The recent £225 million increase in health spending in the Welsh Government’s 2015-16 draft budget¹³ is welcomed, however it will not relieve all the pressures that the NHS faces, and difficult decisions will still have to be made. The Nuffield Trust estimates there will be a £2.5 billion funding gap¹⁴ for the NHS in Wales by 2025/26 and the NHS must engage with colleagues across all public services to seek new ways of working to support the people of Wales.

It is important to acknowledge the enormous achievements made by Health Boards and Trusts to make significant efficiency savings within the Welsh NHS. Health Boards have reduced costs by nearly £1bn from 2010/11 -2013/14, an average efficiency saving of 4.5% per year. In order for the NHS to be sustainable in the future we need to manage healthcare wisely, ensuring that every penny from the budget is spent appropriately and making use of our resources in the best possible way.

5. The leadership challenge:

Empowering leaders to improve health and wellbeing for local people and working in partnership with a wide range of organisations to address the 2015 Challenge. Involving patients and citizens as leaders and having the resilience to make the biggest changes to healthcare in recent history.

Integration is key in Wales and leaders across public bodies must come together to meet the challenges we all face.

We must develop our approach to social services and healthcare and further integrate the two as well as including other sectors. The challenges ahead cannot be faced by the health service alone. Only 20% of the wellbeing agenda is influenced by the quality of care and services from the NHS¹⁵.

“The challenges ahead cannot be faced by the health service alone.”

The NHS must build on how it might improve its ability to work and support partners and colleagues in other sectors to reflect the multi-disciplinary demands required to run public services in a holistic way. This will in turn help reduce overall demand on health services and drive improvements across the NHS and for patient outcomes.

6. The workforce challenge:

Planning for a workforce to better match changing demand. Developing staff roles and skills to provide complex, multidisciplinary, coordinated care, in partnership with individuals and communities.

The pay bill for the NHS accounts for more than 50% of its total annual cost. The cost of the workforce is circa £3.1 billion¹⁶ and has been increasing annually due to an expanding workforce and incremental drift. Across the UK the NHS interacts with more than one million patients every 36 hours and requires enough staff to meet this demand.
NHS Wales directly employs 72,885 people, making it Wales’s biggest employer. While the demand for services increases, workforce skills need to meet this upward trend.

With finances constrained, the amount of money available to the NHS is unlikely to rise, and the historical rate of year-on-year growth in the workforce will not be sustainable. The development of the NHS Wales workforce is therefore very important. We must attempt to recruit and sustain staff at all levels and make best possible use of employees and their diverse skills to build a multi-skilled workforce.

“While the demand for services increases, workforce skills need to meet this upward trend.”

7. The technology challenge:

Using technology to help transform care and enable people to access information and treatment in a way that meets their needs. Spreading innovation to improve the quality of care while responding to the financial challenge facing the NHS.

Technology plays a key role in patient care and often allows for service users to avoid having to go to hospital or to their GP for care. Technologies such as telephones, email, computers, interactive video, digital imaging and healthcare monitoring devices make it possible for clinicians to monitor, diagnose and treat patients without having to be with them physically. These technologies offer a great opportunity to increase dramatically the efficiency of the healthcare industry, keeping patients out of hospital and allowing care to be facilitated from the home.

Technology also provides opportunities for informing and engaging service users and other individuals, giving them the chance to learn about their healthcare and wellbeing through a number of innovative avenues.

The Welsh NHS Confederation proposes a route map to meet the challenges facing the NHS and for the future healthcare system.

A healthcare system fit for the future must:

• Invest in prevention and support people to stay healthy
• Redesign services around people’s changing needs and aspirations
• Empower people to shape their own care, making supported self-care the default assumption for patients and giving people the power to take responsibility for their own health
• Give the public a real say about services
• Continually improve quality and safety of care
• Innovate and embrace new technologies
• Equip staff to work in new ways, and engage staff to improve care, quality and safety
• Eliminate discrimination and reduce inequalities in outcomes
• Use finite resources efficiently, fairly and sustainably, making tough choices
• Be accountable to the people it cares for and the public
The Welsh NHS Confederation

The Welsh NHS Confederation is a membership body representing all the organisations making up the NHS in Wales: seven Local Health Boards and three NHS Trusts.

We support our members to improve health and wellbeing by working with them to deliver high standards of care for patients and best value for taxpayers’ money. We act as a driving force for positive change through strong representation and our policy, influencing and engagement work. To find out more about our work please contact info@welshconfed.org

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