‘A voice for positive change in NHS Wales’
Foreword from Director
Helen Birtwhistle

The past 12 months have proved to be another busy year for NHS Wales. There is no doubt that with elections on the horizon and as the ongoing challenges of growing demand and extremely tight finances put further pressure on services, the coming year will continue to push us all.

Those in the Welsh NHS have continued to deliver care and treatment to the thousands of people who come into contact with its services on a daily basis, despite the impact of an ageing population, rising numbers of chronic diseases and the grip of austerity that is taking its toll on all public services.

Of course, we are not alone in many of the issues that we face. Despite the political and media spotlight that has been placed on NHS Wales in recent times, we know that when it comes to performance, the reality is that it is actually very difficult to compare systems between England and Wales. And the recent study by the Nuffield Trust into the four nations showed that there is little sign that one country is moving ahead of others in overall performance measures.

As we move ahead, we want to emphasise that we are part of a national health service that strives to provide the best for every patient. All UK nations continue to face significant funding gaps, and difficult decisions will need to be made to address them.

We need bold action and significant changes to the way we do things if we are to step up to reality and tackle these issues.

The past year has seen NHS Wales consider how the concept of prudent healthcare can be applied. Over the coming months this will become a reality as the principles of this vital new way of working will be implemented.

For this to be a success, the NHS needs prudent patients who take responsibility for their own health. Health Boards and NHS Trusts will need to work collaboratively with the public.

Changing the way we do things is so vital when it comes to putting NHS Wales on a sustainable footing in the long-term. Demand has risen and yet we’re trying to deal with this in a system that was set up more than 50 years ago. I can’t think of any other area in my life where I would be not only supporting but fighting to keep a system which is outdated.

But the NHS cannot do this alone. All public bodies in Wales must build on how we might improve our ability to work together and support our partners and colleagues in other sectors.

The Welsh NHS Confederation will do all it can to inform and shape a sensible debate around the NHS in Wales. We will support our members to deliver the best quality care for patients while also helping them through the challenges and inevitable tough choices that need to be made.

We need bold action and significant changes to the way we do things if we are to step up to reality and tackle these issues.
Who we are

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 by acting as a driving force for positive change through strong representation and our policy, influencing, communications and engagement work.

The Welsh NHS Confederation’s mission is to improve health and well-being by supporting our members to deliver high standards of care for patients and best value for taxpayers’ money.

Our vision is for the NHS in Wales to provide a continually improving comprehensive health service that is available to all and based on clinical need, not an individual’s ability to pay.

All of our work is underpinned by our core values:

- Listening and responding to the needs of our members;
- Working in partnership to create dialogue and build consensus;
- Acting in the interests of patients and the public.

How we achieve this

Our work includes:

- Influencing health and social care policy;
- Engaging with Ministers, Assembly Members and officials;
- Responding to consultations, inquiries and reviews;
- Appearing at Committees with members and providing support;
- Sharing best practice;
- Building relationships with the media and communication teams both within and outside of NHS Wales;
- Developing a strong NHS Wales brand, particularly through the use of social media;
- Building relationships and working in partnership with other organisations;
- Organising and hosting events and meetings that bring key NHS Wales staff and stakeholders together;
- Representing our members at conferences and external events;
- Producing briefing documents and reports to help inform and shape debate;
- Championing the need for change within NHS Wales.

‘A voice for positive change in NHS Wales’
Influencing debate and policy

On behalf of our members, staff and patients, we want a sensible and mature debate around the NHS in Wales. Through our publications and by directly engaging with all political parties and stakeholders, we outline the challenges facing Health Boards and NHS Trusts and provide context to help inform, lead and shape this debate.

From Rhetoric to Reality

In January 2014 we published our discussion paper ‘From Rhetoric to Reality – NHS Wales in 10 years’ time’. The paper outlined the 10 key issues facing the health service, including funding, public engagement, workforce, public health, an ageing population and integration.

Demands on the health service have never been higher and, in an age where finances have never been tighter, it is increasingly clear that in order to meet these challenges, there must be a sea-change in the way the health service works. In this extremely difficult financial climate, the NHS will not be able to continue to do all that it does now, and certainly not in the same way.

The paper called for “decisive action” and “bold, wholesale changes” in order to match Government ambitions for the NHS in Wales to be the best it possibly can. It stated that we must be “better than our words” if we are to make the rhetoric around these necessary changes a reality.

A key recommendation is that we need to stop talking to ourselves and must engage with all public bodies, third sector and the people who rely on our services. In order to lead by example, the Welsh NHS Confederation is now developing policy areas highlighted within the discussion paper in partnership with other organisations. We have already produced briefing papers with partner organisations, including Community Housing Cymru highlighting the importance of integration between health and housing, the Patient Information Forum looking at the importance of quality patient information and NIACE Cymru looking at education.

Consultations and Committees

A key part of our work is responding to consultations and providing evidence – whether written or oral – to Committee inquiries in order to represent our members and give NHS Wales a voice.

Recent consultation or Committee responses include:

- Public Services Staff Commission White Paper;
- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill;
- The Welsh Affairs Select Committee inquiry into cross-border health arrangements between England and Wales;
- The Review of Concerns and Complaints Handling in NHS Wales;
- The Review of Individual Patient Funding Request Process in Wales;
- The Minimum Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill and Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill;
- The inquiry into Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2015-16;
- The inquiry into the implementation of the Cancer Delivery Plan;
- The inquiry into poverty in Wales.

Recent Committee involvement includes:

- The Health and Social Care Committee’s inquiry into medical technologies in primary care;
- The Health and Social Care Committee’s inquiry into the implementation of the Cancer Delivery Plan;
- The Environment and Sustainability Committee inquiry into the general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill;
- The Health and Social Care Committee’s inquiry into new psychoactive substances (“legal highs”);
- The Finance Committee’s scrutiny of health finances and the draft budget;
- The Welsh Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry into cross-border care.

The paper called for “decisive action” and “bold, wholesale changes”.

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The 2015 Challenge

In preparation for the General Election, the Welsh NHS Confederation has launched a briefing document outlining the major challenges facing the NHS in Wales.

‘The 2015 Challenge for NHS Wales’ paper has been produced for all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and outlines the issues that must be discussed and addressed over the coming months and years.

The seven challenges, including the need challenge, the financial challenge and the workforce challenge, are not new - they have confronted us for many years. But they are compounded by unprecedented financial pressure on the health and care systems across the UK. This financial pressure makes it both harder and more urgent to change.

By providing an insight into the workings of NHS Wales and outlining these challenges it is hoped that this briefing will be a useful resource in considering policy and help to lead a sensible and serious debate surrounding the Welsh NHS and health and well-being. It is only by having an open and honest conversation that we will maintain a health and care system fit for the future.

2016 Challenge Policy Forum

The Forum, which includes a range of national health and care organisations across Wales, has been recently established to discuss some key priorities and policy areas. The Forum offers an opportunity to develop recommendations and consistent messages in the run-up to the 2016 National Assembly Elections.
Communications and Events

Communications

Our communications work varies widely and sees us building relationships with the media, heads of communications within NHS Wales and communications teams outside of the health service.

We have taken the lead in developing and implementing a strategy to strengthen the ‘NHS Wales’ brand. Action is being taken by Health Boards, NHS Trusts and the Welsh NHS Confederation to develop this and communications between all organisations have been stepped up, which has helped with preparedness and consistency of messages.

We regularly issue press releases on behalf of our members in NHS Wales, with recent statements on cross-border care and the draft budget. We have written a number of articles and also have a regular column in the Western Mail. We make great use of social networking and blogs to get our messages out.

A more collaborative approach is being taken across organisations and the next steps in this strategy will be developed and implemented throughout 2015.

Events

Annual Conference

Our annual conference and exhibition is a platform to help set the tone for the coming year. The 2015 event comes at a critical time for the NHS in Wales and discussions will focus on where the Welsh NHS is and where it needs to go from here in order meet challenges that it faces.

The annual conference is an ideal opportunity for delegates to build on existing relationships and create new ones.

We attend the NHS Confederation’s annual conference to share good practice and ideas from across the UK. In 2014 the Welsh Minister for Health and Social Services and the Chief Medical Officer for Wales addressed the UK-wide conference to highlight the important role Government plays in creating the right conditions for people to live full and healthy lives.

A View From…

In 2014 we launched our ‘A View From…’ series of networking seminars to provide an opportunity for Confederation members and partner organisations to come together to examine a range of topics related to the health service in Wales.

The first was held in September, with Dr Andrew Goodall, Chief Executive of NHS Wales and Director General of Health and Social Services, as our guest speaker. The second, in November, looked at public health with Dr Tracey Cooper, Chief Executive of Public Health Wales. Both events have also benefited from a panel discussion and the opportunity for delegates to ask questions. The third ‘A View From…’ event will take place in March 2015.

In addition, we regularly attend events hosted by members and other organisations.

A more collaborative approach is being taken across organisations and the next steps in this strategy will be developed and implemented throughout 2015.
Collaborative working

We know that health cannot be seen as a standalone issue and we have been enthusiastic in our activities to build strong links with colleagues.

We are currently working with ADSS Cymru on a project to assist transformational change across social services and health. This includes a Collaborative Agreement with WCVA, Care Forum Wales, WLGA and Community Housing Cymru to support the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

We recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Sport Wales which demonstrates a commitment from both sectors to come together to promote healthier living and improve the health and well-being of the people of Wales.

Through this partnership we hope to encourage people of all ages to enjoy active and healthier lives and take more personal responsibility for their health which will, in turn, help to secure the future of the health service.

We also worked closely with Citizens Advice Cymru when we produced our briefing on welfare reform in Wales. By reviewing current research and evidence we found it is likely that, as result of the economic difficulties, there will be a growing demand for services because of a significant range of physical and mental health problems.

NHS Wales Employers

NHS Wales Employers is the voice of employers in the NHS in Wales. The organisation works to support and represent NHS organisations on workforce related issues, including negotiating terms and conditions of service and the Welsh NHS Workforce and Organisational Development policy and strategy.

Highlights include:

• Developing with and for employers strategic approaches to pay together with leading and advising on negotiations;
• Providing expertise and all-Wales coordination in relation to workforce issues, policy and practice;
• Supporting effective partnership working, leading for employers on the Welsh Partnership Forum and representing employers on the NHS Staff Council;
• Working and liaising with Welsh Government on behalf of employers;
• Providing ongoing support to the Workforce and Organisational Development peer group networks, supporting the delivery and progression of the respective work programmes;
• Representing NHS Wales on the NHS Pension Scheme Governance and Working Longer Groups; disseminating advice, guidance and insight into future developments;
• Leading the development of responses to workforce consultations on behalf of Health Boards and NHS Trusts.
The year ahead

There is no doubt that the NHS in Wales, in common with healthcare services across the UK, faces significant challenges and new ways will have to be found to deal with these.

While we welcome scrutiny of the NHS, what we really need throughout this time is a sensible discussion with the public about the future of the NHS and how we can transform patient care.

We will continue to work hard to influence and provide context and a voice for NHS Wales during this debate. We will support our members in meeting the challenges that they face and taking some of the difficult decisions that need to be made.

As part of this work, we will continue to build and strengthen relationships with other organisations as we all work together to address some of the many shared issues that the future holds.

While we develop our policy positions and liaise with our members, we will stay true to our commitment to doing all we can to improve patient care, reduce inequalities and work hard for transparency and accountability.

The Welsh NHS Confederation proposes that a healthcare system fit for the future must:

- Invest in prevention and support people to stay healthy;
- Eliminate discrimination and reduce inequalities in outcomes;
- 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;
- Use finite resources efficiently, fairly and sustainably, making tough choices;
- Be accountable to the people it cares for and the public.

For more information please visit our website www.welshconfed.org and follow us on @WelshConfed

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