Celebrating 70 years of the NHS

This briefing has been produced to celebrate the 70th birthday of the NHS, recognise how the NHS has evolved to meet patient need, and consider what the NHS of the future might look like.

Key Points

The NHS was launched 70 years ago on 5 July 2018. This is an opportunity to:

- Celebrate the achievements of one of the nation's most loved institutions;

- Consider how the NHS has evolved to meet changing needs;

- Talk about the wide array of opportunities being created by advances in science, technology and information;

- Thank the extraordinary NHS staff who are always there to advise and care for us;

- Discuss how we can plan to respond to the pressures facing the NHS to make it fit for the future; and

- Consider what the NHS of the future could look like following the publication of the Welsh Government's plan "*A Healthier Wales: Our plan for Health and Social Care*" and the vision for the future within it.

Overview

On 5 July 1948, the NHS was launched by the Health Secretary, Aneurin Bevan. For the first time, hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, opticians and dentists were brought together under one umbrella to provide services for those who needed them, free at the point of delivery.

The aim of the NHS was to promote "the establishment of a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people of England and Wales and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness". The values which underpinned the establishment of the NHS in 1948 still hold true today but the founders of the NHS could not have anticipated the pressures that have been placed on the system since.

Over the last 70 years, the NHS has transformed the health and wellbeing of the nation. It has delivered great medical advances and improvements to public health, meaning we can all expect to live longer lives. It is thanks to the NHS that we have all but eradicated diseases such as polio and diphtheria, and pioneered new treatments like the world's first liver, heart and lung transplants. The NHS continues to drive innovations in patient care, including surgical breakthroughs such as hand transplants, artificial heart transplant surgery, cochlear implants to restore hearing and bionic eyes to restore sight. As a nation, we are rightly proud of the NHS.

None of this would be possible without the skill, dedication and compassion of NHS staff, as well as the many volunteers, charities and communities that support the service. Over 90,000 people work for NHS Wales - the midwives who deliver us into the world; the GPs and pharmacists who advise and treat us; the nurses, doctors and other clinicians who come to our aid when the unexpected happens; the researchers at the forefront of innovation; the porters who keep our hospitals moving; the support staff that make appointments happen; and so many others as well.

The history of the NHS is one of evolution, of responding to the changing needs of the nation. Today's NHS is rising to the challenge of advances in technology, a growing elderly population, increased expectations and knowledge of care and treatment, which means pressures on the service are greater than they have ever been. The population of Wales has soared by over 510,000 people (a 16% increase) since the NHS was launched and more patients now receive life-saving, life-changing care than ever before.

Public satisfaction with the NHS is higher than it was 20 years ago. Looking to the future, the NHS is becoming more integrated across all public bodies and investing in new medicines, research and digital technologies like apps and artificial intelligence, which will ensure we continue to live longer, manage our own health and wellbeing, live independently and have healthier lives.

As the NHS turns 70, we will be talking about plans to address these pressures and make sure the NHS is fit for the future. Innovations such as precision medicine, artificial intelligence, genome research and the way we use NHS services will transform healthcare as we know it. This is a future where healthcare is based around early detection and preventative care, where patients can access expert advice on demand, and where people will only go to hospital when it is essential. Treatments could be tailored to an individual's DNA and surgeries could be carried out virtually from remote locations. As highlighted in the Welsh Government's plan *"A Healthier Wales",* the future should have a whole system approach that focuses on wellbeing and healthy lives and delivers care at the right time and as close to home as possible.

The history of the NHS

The following section outlines some key achievements of the NHS since its creation in 1948.

The early years 1948-1959

- **5July 1948:** The NHS was established. Before the NHS was set up, healthcare was provided on a piecemeal basis with many people having to pay directly for healthcare services and others not receiving the services they needed.
- **1952:** Prescription charges are introduced at 5p.
- **1953**: DNA structure revealed.
- **1954:** Link between smoking and cancer prevalence established for the first time.
- **1956:** Velindre Hospital opens in Cardiff.
- **1958:** Polio and diphtheria vaccinations programme launched.
- **1959:** Mental Health Act introduced, reducing the grounds people could be compulsorily admitted and detained in a mental health hospital.

The NHS in the 1960s

- **1960:** First UK kidney transplant takes place at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.
- **1961:** The contraceptive pill is made widely available.
- **1962:** First full hip replacement in the world is carried out at Wrightington Hospital, Wigan.
- **1965:** Prescription charges are abolished and remain free until June 1968, when charges are reintroduced.
- **1966:** Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth opens.
- **1967:** The Abortion Act is passed, becoming law on 27 April 1968.
- **1968:** The first heart transplant in Britain is carried out in London.
- **1969:** Nevill Hall Hospital, Abergavenny opens.

The NHS in the 1970s

- **1970:** Roy Calne develops the use of immunosuppressant drug cyclosporine, which prevents the body rejecting grafts and transplanted organs.
- **1971:** University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff opens.
- **1972:** First CT scans to examine the body used.
- **1974:** Community Health Councils (CHCs) introduced to represent the views of the public.
- **1975:** First Patient Controlled Analgesia equipment is introduced, developed by the Welsh National School of Medicine.
- **1978:** The world's first baby is born as a result of IVF.
- **1979:** First successful bone marrow transplant on a child takes place.

The NHS in the 1980s

- **1980:** Keyhole surgery is used for the first time in an operation to remove a gallbladder.
- **1983:** The Mental Health Act is introduced covering the assessment, treatment and rights of people with a mental health disorder.
- **1984:** Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor opens.
- **1985:** The Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend opens.
- **1986:** First AIDS health campaign launched.
- **1987:** Institute of Medical Genetics opens in Cardiff.
- **1988:** Breast screening introduced.
- **1989:** The Welsh Health Planning Forum published the Strategic Intent and Direction for the NHS in Wales, pioneering the concept of 'health gain'.

The NHS in the 1990s

- **1990:** Prince Philip hospital, Llanelli opens.
- **1992:** The first licensed pneumococcal vaccine introduced, preventing some cases of pneumonia, meningitis, and sepsis.
- **1994:** NHS Organ Donor Register launched.
- **1998:** NHS Direct established, providing health advice and information. NHS Direct became NHS Direct Wales in 2001.
- **1999**: The National Assembly for Wales is established in Cardiff.

The NHS in the 2000s

- **2000:** Researchers at Swansea University uncover innovative treatment options for skin conditions through novel light therapy.
- **2001:** NHS Direct Wales is launched, providing a 24-hour telephone and internet health advice service for non-emergency incidents.
- **2001:** Wales Air Ambulance Charity launched.
- **2002:** Cancer Research UK scientists in Wales announce a discovery that could help halt the rapid spread of breast cancer.
- **2005:** Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales opens.
- **2007**: Free prescriptions are introduced in Wales.
- **2008:** The establishment of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, the first in the world, and launch of the 1,000 Lives campaign.
- **2009**: New NHS Wales system introduced. The new system established seven Local Health Boards and three NHS Trusts.

The NHS in the 2010s

- **2010:** The first 3D trans oesophaeal echocardiography scanning machine is introduced at Morriston Hospital.
- **2011:** Free parking at hospitals in Wales is introduced and the Choose Well is initiative launched. Choose Well raises awareness of which NHS services are available, and which ones are the most appropriate for the patient.
- **2012:** DNA mapping for cancer patients and those with rare diseases is announced.
- **2013**: The Active Travel (Wales) Act is passed, promoting active travel journeys and secure new and improved active travel routes.
- **2014:** NHS Wales staff are paid at least the living wage. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is also passed, providing the legal framework for improving the wellbeing of people and carers who need care and support, and for transforming social services in Wales.
- **2015:** The NHS Wales Organ Donation Register is created, introducing a soft 'opt-out' system for consent to organ donation.
- **2016**: The Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act is passed, the first in the UK. Choose Pharmacy is launched, enabling pharmacists to take responsibility for managing and treating minor health ailments.
- **2017** – Public Health (Wales) Act passed.
- **2018:** The UK's first proton beam cancer centre announced to open in Newport.
- **5 July 2018:** The NHS celebrates its 70th birthday.

Challenges in the future

Demand management

Since the creation of the NHS 70 years ago, society has changed dramatically. Our average life expectancy has improved considerably, with men and women in Wales living more than 12 years longer than in 1948 – something to celebrate as a success for the NHS. But an ageing population brings with it fresh challenges for health and social care. As with all UK health systems, the NHS in Wales faces these challenges against a backdrop of increasing demand and increasing financial pressure.

Integration

Integration of health and social care is a means to an end – providing patients with a seamless service at the right time and in the right place. It is about getting all parts of the system to work together so that the patient receives timely, efficient and effective care with the right outcome. To achieve this, we need to get services working seamlessly together in health and social care, primary and secondary care, and physical and mental health services.

More broadly, improving population well-being and reducing demand on services also requires an integrated approach. It depends on good housing, education, social care, health, community support and an environment that actively promotes and encourages people to live healthy lives.

Workforce

The NHS is Wales' biggest employer, currently directly employing over 90,000 people. Staff costs represent the largest expense for the NHS in Wales. The pay bill has continued to increase year on year, with a significant increase over the last three years from £3.16 billion in 2014 -15, to £3.6 billion in 2017-18. The workforce must evolve and respond to the challenges ahead. As well as meeting the future needs of the population, the workforce must develop new ways of working to manage an expected shortfall in future NHS staff levels. We must acknowledge that maintaining and developing the current workforce is just as important as growing and training a new one.

Population health and wellbeing

Wales faces a significant number of population health challenges, including high levels of obesity, a high number of people drinking above the recommended guidelines, and poor levels of physical activity. The most recent Welsh Health Survey results show that 19% of adults currently smoke, 20% drink more than the recommended guidelines of alcohol consumption, 32% are physically inactive and 59% are overweight or obese. The impact of such behaviours is resulting in greater demand on health services, as well as significant costs.

Finance

Finance has long been a challenge for health and social services, but never more so since the economic crash nearly a decade ago. The Welsh Government has budgeted £7.6 billion for health, wellbeing and social services for this financial year, which comprises nearly 49% of the Welsh Government's £15.5 billion revenue budget. Despite this, the funding gap for health and social care in Wales could be between £1.4 billion and £2.5 billion per annum by 2031.

A rise in demand, coupled with constrained financial resources, has made delivering health and care services increasingly difficult. The NHS is committed to working more efficiently to rise to the challenges it faces. However, it has become increasingly clear that traditional methods of savings are unlikely to deliver what is needed. It is important that we work with stakeholders to fully understand the future resources required to secure the system.

Digital

The digital revolution is upon us. In our domestic lives we understand and embrace it, and yet we are often disappointed, frustrated and surprised that we cannot engage digitally with the NHS.

Care recipients have the right to benefit from improvements brought about by digital and technological advances – not least those that help people stay at home. The health and care system must maximise the strategic and operational potential of digital technology as an enabler of change.

Looking to the future

The history of the NHS is one of evolution, of responding to the changing needs of the nation. Looking to the future, the NHS is becoming more integrated, with a whole system approach to health and social care, and is investing in new medicines, genetic research and digital technologies like apps and artificial intelligence that will help to ensure we continue to live longer and healthier lives.

This is a future where healthcare is based around early detection and preventative care, where the NHS works collaboratively with local communities to help people live healthily, and with individuals and carers to spot and treat the signs of illness as soon as possible. Examples of current work that is making this future a reality include:

- Having a long-term vision of a whole system approach to health and social care;

- Introducing and living the Quadruple Aim principles to drive a shared understanding across the health and social care system;

- Adopting Value Based Healthcare;

- Furthering developing primary care clusters;

- Raising awareness and implementing social prescribing;

- Implementing a 'health in all policies' approach;

- Introducing the Transformation Programme to drive innovation;

- Promoting the 1000 Lives programme;

- Increasing public engagement; and

- Implementing prudent healthcare and core principles across the system.

Where patients have serious illness, expert advice and cutting-edge treatments have become available to more and more people. In the future, treatments could be tailored to an individual's DNA or surgeries be carried out virtually from remote locations. NHS-led work, supported by the Welsh Government, is bringing these futuristic treatments into reach through:

- Personalised medicine;

- Proton beam therapy; and

- Increased use of artificial intelligence.

Health and Social Care in 2028 – The NHS at 80

Wind the clock forward to July 2028 and imagine the following. It's a cloudy Saturday morning. Things don't seem that different from 2018, but look a little closer and you will see a very different picture of health and care in Wales.

The first thing you notice is the number of people outside, making the most of the natural environment – walking, jogging and cycling. The town has a community services hub in its centre, which is open and bustling while its parks have become "green gyms". The hub has a range of services including a GP, a dentist, a pharmacy, a housing office, debt and benefits advice and a digital resource centre next door to a local leisure centre which is also busy with classes. Many years ago it changed its title to a sports and public health centre.

Preventative services have become the focus of the community, ranging from voluntary support groups to formal public services, all designed with citizens to help people stay connected, engaged, happy and healthy. Children are being taught about healthy living in schools and families are supported to give them the best start in life. The town is proud of its dementia-friendly status although breakthroughs in treatment mean that some forms of the disease are now preventable. The town has a wide network of volunteers and carers that provide invaluable support to vulnerable people in the community. People are calling in to see their neighbours, particularly those who live alone and those who are struggling with their wellbeing.

You will notice a number of extra care facilities and mixed housing developments in and around the town which have brought a renewed vibrancy to the town centre. The local market is in full flow and young and old alike are enjoying the environment and supporting the local economy. There is a real sense of community cohesion with teachers, charity workers and postal workers, all getting involved in supporting the local population.

One thing that isn't visible, but all take for granted, is the hyper-fast broadband now available throughout the town and across the whole of Wales. The older people in the town can dimly recall the ponderous internet associated with the era of so called "high speed broadband". The new services operate at routine speeds achieving connections of 1 Gb or higher.

These advances in digital technology have transformed the town and its public services. There are new digitally-based businesses in the local community, many more people are working from home, and crucially, telehealth and telecare services are widely used to help maintain people's independence, health and wellbeing. The other fundamental change is the use of data. Individuals own their health and care records, and with health and care professionals, they are using their data more proficiently to prevent illness, design new services, develop new treatments and manage the whole system more efficiently.

Sadly, the cure for all ills has not yet been found and there are still people who need hospital care. But if you look into the nearest hospital you will not see queues of people waiting to be seen. The public are well informed about what medical support they need, as well as where and how they can receive care.

Prudent healthcare is embedded in the nation's psyche – the public are actively engaged in their health and wellbeing and are supported to stay well. They are equal partners in their care, they take action to keep themselves well and the majority are living independently.

People are able to confidently navigate the health and care system and are empowered to work with public servants and ensure they get the help they need. Crucially, the public understand and support the principle that services are organised to deliver the best clinical outcomes and therefore are prepared to travel to get the diagnosis or specific treatment they need at the quality they deserve.

Of equal importance is that preventive medicine has become increasingly prominent in healthcare and has brought about reductions in levels of smoking and obesity. They have also increased rates of physical activity among the local population. The development of genome-based diagnoses and related technologies means people receive individually targeted information and treatment to live as healthily as possible. Moreover, chronic health issues are routinely monitored remotely using mobile apps and medical sensors. These technologies allow patients to spend less time in hospitals, freeing up resources for those who need them urgently.

Doctors, social workers, nurses, social care workers, teachers, pharmacists, paramedics, therapists, local housing officers, charity workers, volunteers and carers are all working together seamlessly. The public value and respect health and social care services because they deliver what they need efficiently and effectively. This has been made possible because the health and care workforce (public, private and third sector) works in multi-disciplinary teams and partnerships, each having the training, skills, support and capacity necessary to meet the needs of the population they serve. Each profession is valued and respected and while the governance of health and social care still resides with the NHS and local government, there is a seamless pathway of health and social care provision.

Conclusion

At the heart of the next ten years is innovation in the provision of health and care, and embracing it is critical in enabling the NHS in Wales to deliver better outcomes and experiences for patients. We can all play a role in supporting the NHS in this special birthday year. We can do this through taking care of our own health and wellbeing, being engaged in health and social care services and using services wisely.

How can the Welsh NHS Confederation help you?

Please get in touch if you want further details on any of the issues raised in this briefing. Please contact **Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Policy and Public Affairs Manager at Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org**

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body which represents all the organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards and three NHS Trusts.

You can visit our website at **www.welshconfed.org** or follow us on Twitter 🐦 **@WelshConfed**

© The NHS Confederation 2018. Registered charity no: 1090329.