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| | Briefing for AMs ahead of the debate “Preparing the health and care services in Wales for a no-deal Brexit”. |
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Introduction

This briefing has been produced for Assembly Members in preparation for the debate on [Preparing the health and care services in Wales for a no-deal Brexit](#) taking place in Plenary on **Tuesday the 1st of October**.

Key points to consider:

- The Welsh NHS Confederation continues to support our members, the seven Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales, in collaboration with other healthcare organisations to ensure cross-sector planning for a possible no-deal scenario.
- The sector is doing everything it can to manage and prepare health and social care services for a no-deal Brexit. Contingency plans have been put in place and have been rigorously tested and reviewed. However, all our preparations will not prevent the possible disruption that could be caused by leaving the EU without a deal.
- Current contingency plans have been designed to ensure health and care services continue to deliver the care people need. The sector is confident that preparations in place are robust and will allow the service to maintain a high standard of care, ensuring patient safety isn't compromised.
- However, no-deal relies on more than the NHS getting their preparations right for contingency plans to be effective. The NHS and social care sector have been working closely with the Welsh Government and Local Resilience Forums to make sure there is a robust a position for whatever Brexit comes our way.
- We value all EU/EEA nationals working in the health service and the contribution they make, not just as professionals, but to our communities. We have been raising awareness of the Settles Status Scheme to ensure that EU citizens working within the service are aware of the Scheme and apply if they wish to do so.
- There are other key areas which we will continue to prioritise while we exit the European Union, including reciprocal healthcare arrangements and patients and workers' rights.
- Further detail around the Brexit contingency preparations can be found in our publication: [Brexit Preparedness Toolkit](#).

Preparing the health and care services in Wales for a no-deal exit

The Welsh NHS Confederation has been working with our members, social care organisations and the Welsh Government to ensure robust preparations are in place to protect health and care services in a no-deal Brexit scenario. Patient safety remains the top priority, while at the same time ensuring continuity of care, staff and supply. There are detailed processes in place throughout no-deal planning including inventory management, clinical engagement and cross UK co-operation. Any shortages identified will be escalated from regional, to Wales, to a UK level, if needed, through daily reporting processes established by the Welsh Emergency Co-ordination Centre (ECCW).

Supply of Medicines and Vaccines

Medicines shortages already occur in the NHS and there are measures in place as part of normal business continuity arrangements that prevent stock disruptions while ensuring robust business continuity plans are in place should a disruption occur. Frontline staff will continue to use the existing, robust supply chains to order medicines and to highlight shortages. This is being handled through the National Supply and Disruption Response system overseen by UK Chief Medical Officers; focus has recently been placed on increasing involvement of Welsh clinicians in decisions. The NHS in Wales have kept their medicines stock above average, with six weeks of additional stocks. We have been encouraging patients and pharmacists to not stockpile medicines themselves. The UK Government is working with the pharmaceutical industry to ensure the supply of medicines is not affected and any increase in costs is minimised.

Our members inform us that there currently are no issues with the availability of medicines as a result of Brexit. If a medicine is not available, then pharmacists are trained to provide alternative medicines to patients. Patient safety is a fundamental priority. In a no-deal scenario and the event of a shortage of medicines, pharmacists may be given the ability to dispense smaller dosages or a different strength; this would only occur in exceptional circumstances. There is also legislation in place to enable community pharmacists, where appropriate, to substitute a prescribed medicine.

Supply of Medical Devices and Clinical Consumables

An extensive review into the supply of medical devices and consumables has been done on a national level. The Welsh NHS has worked to understand the national and local risks and developed contingency plans. This involves understanding the needs from across sectors and building plans to make sure there is no impact to patient safety or people receiving social care. An additional storage facility has been purchased to ensure supplies of medical equipment and other essential items for hospitals and social care are not disrupted (e.g. syringes, gowns, food) and there is a coordinated national response in place in case of disruption. Any issues will be reported through local NHS procurement teams. Work is ongoing to further test clinical involvement of supply disruption procedures and increase stock of some items which are not routinely housed to better support social care.

Supply of Non-Clinical Consumables, Goods and Services

The Welsh NHS is looking at the impact a no-deal scenario could have on IT services and equipment. We have encouraged stakeholders to view [technical notices](#) published by the UK Government in order to make plans for a no-deal Brexit. If health

and social care organisations have identified whether they have a need for additional equipment and spares locally, they should relay this information to their Procurement Services. There is no evidence to suggest that there will be an overall food shortage. A no-deal Brexit has the potential to result in reduced choice, therefore NHS and social care organisations have been tasked to consider how menus could be amended if this is the case.

Key issues for health and social care as the UK prepares to leave the EU

The Welsh NHS Confederation continues to engage with Welsh and UK Governments along with other stakeholders to ensure our [key issues for health and social care as the UK prepares to leave the EU](#) are at the centre of all discussions surrounding Brexit. This includes a possible no-deal scenario as well as longer term considerations such as how the future relationship between the EU, the UK and devolved nations would impact the provision of health and care services in Wales.

Preserving reciprocal healthcare arrangements

Working to ensure the preservation of reciprocal healthcare arrangements have been a central priority for the health and care sector in Wales. The UK Government has recently [announced](#) their plan to fund the healthcare for UK nationals living in the EU for up to 6 months if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. While this provides some reassurance that most UK nationals living in the EU won't have to pay for their healthcare costs immediately after Brexit, this is only a temporary measure and is not reciprocal in that there is still a great deal of uncertainty around the arrangements for EU citizens in the UK.

Ensuring a talented and sustainable workforce

Due to the demographics in Wales, with an older population and more people living with complex needs, EU nationals are a vital to our health and social care and their contribution cannot be understated. We want them to stay in Wales, and we would like an environment where they are encouraged to work and live in Wales. So far there has not been a significant departure of EU nationals from the health and social care workforce.

There are many highly talented individuals currently working in posts with vacancies and recruitment challenges. During this process, it is essential that the Mutually Recognised Professional Qualifications be protected for the Welsh NHS to support its existing and future EU national workforce. We produced a [briefing](#) on how Mutually Recognised Professional Qualifications would be impacted by a no-deal Brexit.

We want to encourage EU nationals working in health and social care to apply for the Settled Status Scheme. We produced a [Preparing for Settled Status Line Managers Toolkit](#) which is designed to help managers provide any support that their colleagues who are citizens of other European countries may require.

In relation to future immigration proposals, we have recently responded to the UK Government's [Immigration White Paper](#). As part of our written evidence to the proposals we highlighted that currently over 50% (900) of the 1,600 EU/EEA national staff working in the Welsh NHS fall below the proposed £30,00pa salary threshold. These staff work in highly skilled areas including nurses, midwives and

physiotherapists, pharmacists and ambulance service support. While the impact felt on the NHS will be significant, it will be even greater for social. We have submitted two written responses to the Immigration White Paper: one focusing on how this could impact the [Welsh NHS](#) and the other looking at the integration of the [health and social care system in Wales](#). We want an immigration policy which retains and attracts talented individuals from all over the world to work in our health and social care services.

How the Welsh NHS Confederation is supporting our members

The Welsh NHS Confederation have been able to co-ordinate a Brexit Support Programme funded by the Welsh Government European Transition Fund. We have been working across the health and care sector in Wales, actively engaging with organisations such as ADSS Cymru, Social Care Wales and the WLGA, to ensure robust mechanisms are in place and there are consistent communication across our sector. Together we published and update a [frequently asked questions document](#) for health and social care as we move towards leaving the EU. We also produce a variety of briefings which summarise details on topics of interest to the sector. For example, we produced a briefing on how the changes to [EU Funding](#) will impact health and care organisations and projects across the NHS.

We are also members of two UK level forums, the [Brexit Health Alliance](#) and the [Cavendish Coalition](#). Bringing together the NHS, patient organisations, medical research and healthcare industries, the Brexit Health Alliance campaigns for the interests of patients and the wider healthcare sector post-Brexit, while the Cavendish Coalition is committed to working together to ensure we continue to employ high calibre professionals and trainees in health and social care. As members of these Forums, we ensure that the concerns of the health and care sector in Wales are represented at a UK level.

We have produced a [Brexit Preparedness Toolkit](#) which provides a high-level summary of current no-deal preparations. The toolkit supports the NHS and other stakeholders in understanding the implications of a no-deal Brexit, the possible and potential mitigation mechanisms. This document is intended to be a tool to spark thinking about the longer-term policy and service implications as well as opportunities leaving the European Union may have for the healthcare sector in Wales. This has an [accompanying Annex](#) which is updated regularly and acts as a resource for all relevant Wales and UK level guidance.

The Welsh NHS Confederation

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body that represents the leadership of all the statutory NHS organisations in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales.