

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Eich cyf / Your ref:
Ein cyf / Our ref: PMW/tv/Palmer

4 September 2009

Dear Mr Morgan

Wales Audit Office Report 'Delayed Transfers of Care follow-through' published 13 May 2009

Thank you for your letter of 25 June in which you have requested a response to the recommendations and issues set out in Part 2 of the above Report. My apologies for the delayed response, but I wanted to provide you with a comprehensive note and this has required some discussions across Directorate General functions.

I was pleased to note in the report that both the WAO and Audit Committee have recognised the considerable improvement in reducing the extent and impact of delays across Wales. The most recent census as of 15 July shows that delay numbers reduced by 60% and the number of days delayed reduced by 74% from September 2003. This substantial downward trend emphasizes the commitment shown by the Welsh Assembly Government and partner organisations in developing modern, accessible and responsive services that enable people to live as independently as possible.

The major issues raised in your letter are:

- What plans are in place to take forward a reorganisation of the census process and when will these plans be implemented?
- How will Local Service Boards be supported to drive change and are there any other mechanisms in place to create the long and medium term plans necessary for sustained improvement?
- What steps is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to work in partnership with local health and social care providers to create an improved whole systems approach during and after the reorganisation of NHS Wales?



- What plans are in place to encourage health and social care providers to more effectively share best practice in tackling the wider issues that lead to delayed transfers of care?
- You have also requested an update on the work being done to promote the independence of vulnerable patients and make better use of resources.

My response to each of these matters is as follows.

What plans are in place to take forward a reorganisation of the census process and when will these plans be implemented?

With regard to the reorganisation of the census process, the Welsh Assembly Government has identified the need for a comprehensive review in order to provide a clearer, more equitable measurement of delayed transfers of care across Wales. This review is currently underway addressing the key elements requiring change identified by the Wales Audit Office.

These include:

- the removal of locally agreed timescales from the census reporting process, and an increased focus on the use of estimated date of discharge to encourage proactive and timely discharge planning;
- a review of the “reasons for delay” codes, streamlining the process and ensuring a better reflection of the actual issues;
- improved reporting functions to support the use of the database as a local information tool; and
- amendments to reflect current organisational change.

This work is planned to be in place for the October 2009 census, in order to coincide with the new Local Health Boards’ establishment as fully operational statutory bodies.

How will Local Service Boards be supported to drive change and are there any other mechanisms in place to create the long and medium term plans necessary for sustained improvement?

Local Service Boards are a vital element of the Welsh Assembly Government’s approach to providing citizen focused services through better joining up and strengthened collective working across sectors.

Evidence given to the National Assembly for Wales’ Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee enquiry into LSBs last year demonstrated that they are adding value, not through formal powers, but by giving sustained executive attention to forging a shared vision, taking responsibility for inter-agency relationships and leading specific changes through delivery projects. Further progress has been made since then, with the establishment of LSBs throughout Wales, leading over ninety improvement projects, working on key partnership issues.

Local Service Boards are recognised as having considerable potential for making an impact on delayed transfers and indeed the majority of the Local Service Boards have selected joint working or service integration between NHS and Social Services as a first

priority. The WAG Making the Connections team reports that there is evidence of real change being delivered in terms of joint commissioning, shared planning, the creation of joint teams and shared management posts as a result of LSB projects.

Local Service Boards are showing promise in the following areas:

- Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Wrexham LSBs have recently produced a self evaluation of progress across a wide range of health and social care projects that demonstrates improved outcomes including reduced delayed transfers of care and strengthened joint commissioning;
- Bridgend and Powys LSBs have prioritised mental health services as a key partnership issue addressing discharge and transfer issues specific to users of mental health services; and
- the Welsh Assembly Government's chronic conditions demonstrator sites in North Wales, Carmarthenshire and Cardiff have been linked to the LSB pilots to help develop synergy between national innovation and local delivery.

The NHS Wales representative is one of the core members of each of the twenty two Local Service Boards alongside colleagues from the Police, Local Government and Voluntary Sector; and I am determined that NHS Wales will continue to play an active and constructive role in support of LSBs. I have moved to secure continued senior NHS representation on each of the boards through the recent NHS Reform, by requiring the nomination of Executive Directors from the seven new LHBs to the twenty two LSBs.

In addition to Local Service Boards, other activities that are driving improved performance are:

- initiation of a number of NHS/Local Government joint projects over the last few years by statutory Health, Social Care and Wellbeing partnerships have that have provided the basis for much of the LSB activity;
- monitoring of delayed transfers at a national and local level through the NHS Wales' Annual Operating Framework¹ (managed through NHS Wales' Regional Offices) and the Local Government Performance Management Framework; and
- continuing healthcare pilots that the Director of Social Services Wales has been leading across Wales, with reduction of delayed transfers a principle focus.

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- ¹ The continued reduction in the number of delayed transfers of care and the number of delays has been a central focus of the Welsh Assembly Government. There has been a set of national targets within the Annual Operating Framework for the past 5 years which has required NHS organisations to achieve continual improvement.
 - The approach to target setting was changed in 2008 with the aim of eliminating all delays. As such, each organisation is now placed on a three-year programme which requires them to achieve an operating performance commensurate with top 10 percentile of LHB performance in Wales, compared to the 2007/2008 baseline.
 - There has been a significant improvement in the number of delays over recent years with 561 reported delays in January 2005 being reduced to 313 in May 2009. Similarly, the number of delays in mental health reduced from 251 in October 2004 to 105 in March 2009
 - The NHS continues to work with local authorities and other partners to make further improvements. The Regional Offices of the WAG performance manage each NHS organisation rigorously to ensure that optimum performance is delivered.

What steps is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to work in partnership with local health and social care providers to create an improved whole systems approach during and after the reorganisation of NHS Wales?

We are taking a number of steps to promote partnership working across health and social care organisations.

Partnership working is a key theme of our NHS Reforms as evidenced by the following:

- the statutory duty for Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies and Children and Young People's Plans will transfer to the new LHBs from October 2009 and they are key mechanisms for enabling partnership working;
- Local Government has been invited to provide representation at all levels of the newly reformed NHS Wales structure, on the National Advisory Board and on the Local Health Boards;
- national planning and performance management systems are being revised in the light of the NHS Wales reforms and they will support both the National Advisory Board and National Delivery Group to strengthen existing collaborative working arrangements;
- work has also begun on whether the health and social care performance management arrangements can be more closely aligned around outcomes for citizens through outcome agreements which we are piloting with our Local Government Policy colleagues and the Welsh Local Government Association; and
- Executive Leadership Group officials recently met with public services leaders to generate options for significant improvement in service delivery and efficiency on cross-government programmes and identified a work programme to respond to Dr Chris Jones' work on the Primary and Community Strategy as a key contribution to this agenda. This work programme will build on the excellent work done by Professor Bim Bhowmick in Gwent and a number of other eminent geriatricians in Wales on improving care transfers.

Finally, the Minister is currently considering the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Local Government and NHS Wales, which will provide a high level commitment to effective partnership working in pursuit of citizen outcomes.

What plans are in place to encourage health and social care providers to more effectively share best practice in tackling the wider issues that lead to delayed transfers of care?

You asked what plans and activities are in place to encourage health and social care providers to more effectively share best practice.

There has been considerable activity to share and disseminate best practice across health and social care organisations:

- the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare and the Social Services Improvement Agency run a number of general best practice programmes;
- WAG sponsored learning and improvement networks attached to significant grants (e.g. the Joint Working Grant, telecare and community equipment grants) run a number of specific operational programmes;

- independent evaluation has been used to identify best practice flowing from policies and grants that tackle the wider issues leading to delayed transfers of care (recently the joint working grant was evaluated and findings disseminated nationally); and
- Ministers have announced the establishment of the National Institute for Social Care and Health Research that will provide a stronger basis for the sharing of evidence based health and social care practice.

An update on the work being done to promote the independence of vulnerable patients and make better use of resources

You have raised the need for whole systems leadership and strategic direction in promoting the independence of vulnerable people.

In this area we are:

- providing substantial additional continuing healthcare funding that has identified significant opportunities to promote independence based models. The additional funding we are providing must be used to lever service change and pump prime service developments that move towards more proactive models of health and social care, primarily within community settings; and
- developing an evaluation process for the investment in continuing healthcare. This will include local and national monitoring of impacts and outcomes and will assist partnerships to plan and deliver more effective services.

Our developing policy for continuing healthcare will put much greater effort into developing models of service which intervene earlier to help prevent or delay the need for intensive health and social care services.

It will:

- provide a more proactive approach to maximise independence and re-ablement;
- recognise the role of health and social services working in partnership in delivering better outcomes; and
- articulate a vision for longer term care that links the various elements of policy.

This work is underway, with engagement from a range of local government, NHS and voluntary sector representatives.

There are also important links with a range of other strategic and service policies being developed that aim to maintain community based support, such as:

- the Chronic Conditions Management Framework;
- the Community Services Framework for Older People; and
- enhanced support to deliver improved outcomes for people, such as the Frailty Project.

Collectively, these strategies will deliver a stronger approach to promoting and maximising independence.

I hope that you find this report on the issues you have raised both comprehensive and reassuring. I would be very happy to discuss any of these matters with you further and to provide the Committee with further details in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Williams', is positioned above the typed name and title.

Paul Williams

Director General, Health & Social Services

Chief Executive, NHS Wales

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