

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-07-06(p4)

Meeting date: Wednesday 5th April 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Review of Cancer Services

Purpose

1. The Committee is invited to agree:

- terms of reference for the review;
- issues for consultation;
- extent of consultation;
- process for identifying existing research, reports and good practice; and
- the timetable for the review.

Background

2. At its meeting on 23 March the Committee considered the responses to consultation on the scope of the review and heard evidence from Professors Malcolm Mason, Baroness Finlay and Tim Maughan of the Department of Oncology and Palliative Care at Cardiff University. The Minister for Health and Social Services also provided an overview of action the Assembly Government is taking to improve cancer services. This paper sets out the issues that were identified for possible inclusion in the review.

3. The Committee agreed that in the time available for the review it would not be possible to look at every aspect of cancer services, but that it should focus on specific points in the patient's journey from prevention and screening through to treatment and palliative care.

Terms of Reference and Issues for Consultation

4. The Committee agreed that the aim of the review should be to review equality of provision and equity of access to the full range of cancer services in Wales, and that these services should be high quality.

5. In the course of the evidence from the three witnesses and subsequent discussion a number of issues emerged that could be addressed in the review. One of these was that the Committee should consider the barriers to good service and the means of overcoming them. The Chair reminded Members of the importance of having specific recommendations that could be implemented by the Assembly

Government. Thus, they would need to be achievable and capable of being monitored by the Assembly.

6. Taking account of these points the following terms of reference are suggested:

- to review equality of provision and equity of access to the full range of cancer services that meet the National Cancer Standards;
- to identify the barriers to good service and recommend measures to overcome them;
- to report the Committee's findings to the Assembly by 2 March 2007.

7. The other main issues that were identified in discussion were:

- i. the role of information technology in tracking and facilitating the patient's journey;
- ii. integrating research and good practice with service delivery;
- iii. the complexity of commissioning services – the roles of the local health boards, cancer networks and Health Commission Wales;
- iv. the value of investment in screening and immunisation;
- v. the need to keep abreast of, and respond to, developing technologies and therapies;
- vi. ensuring effective links with the voluntary sector;
- vii. improving data on the where the terminally ill spend their last weeks or months to inform service provision;
- viii. the rising costs of drugs and therapies, in particular:
 - The costs to the drugs budget of continued prescribing of inappropriate drugs;
 - people who are prepared to pay for drugs that are not available on the NHS are not allowed to do so within the NHS, they have to become private patients and pay for all treatment;
 - The future of the Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin, which is the only source of independent prescribing advice to doctors, pharmacists and other professionals.

8. The Committee may wish to include the general principle that patient-centred care should be mainstreamed across cancer services and user involvement encouraged.

9. It may not be possible to cover all issues comprehensively and Members may prefer to select those where they are likely to be able to identify solutions as well as barriers.

10. Alternatively, as part of the consultation exercise the Committee could invite written evidence on barriers and solutions to all the issues and narrow the focus in the autumn in the light of the responses to consultation and expert advice.

Extent of Consultation

11. We recommend wide consultation by letter to statutory and voluntary health and social care service providers; the voluntary sector, including organisations representing the black and minority ethnic groups; organisations that could provide a service user perspective; representative bodies of health and care professionals; and medical schools and other training and research bodies. In addition the review could be advertised in one or two professional journals.

12. We would aim to start the consultation in mid April, seeking responses by mid-July.

Process for Identifying Existing Research, Reports and Good Practice

13. Some reports have already been identified. Members Research Service will be able to advise on others, as will the expert reference group when it is appointed.

14. We would aim to provide a paper for the committee on the existing work by July.

Appointment of the Expert Reference Group

15. The Committee agreed on 23 March that further advice should be sought from Professor Mason, Professor Baroness Finlay and Professor Maughan on the constitution of a an expert reference group.

Timetable

- April to mid-July - written consultation and oral evidence from key institutions and organisations;
- May establish expert reference group;
- May - Committee Members to decide areas of fact finding they will undertake individually or in groups and to start that work;
- May to June – seek guidance from reference group on existing research and other work that can inform the review;
- mid- July to end of August –initial analysis of written evidence;
- September to December – further oral evidence, including following up responses to the written consultation;
- October – Committee members to report back on their fact finding;
- January / February 2007 - consideration of evidence and drafting report;
- late February publication of report;
- March – Assembly debate on report.

Committee Service
March 2006