

## Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

### HSC PSS 125

Ymateb gan: | Response from: [Ffederasiwn Cenedlaethol Sefydliad y Merched – Cymru](#) | [National Federation of Women's Institutes - Wales](#)

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## Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor Initial priorities identified by the Committee

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrsgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

### **C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?**

**Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?**

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#### Background

The WI is the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK with approximately 200,000 members in over 6,000 WIs across England, Wales, and the Islands. In Wales, there are about 16,000 members belonging to 500 WIs.

Health and wellbeing has always been a key priority for the WI with numerous health-related mandates dating back to its inception on issues ranging from maternal health and endometriosis to family planning and osteoporosis. Through its campaigns, the WI aims to empower women to take responsibility for their own health through education and equal access to information and facilities.



## **Women's health**

The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI)-Wales would like to see the Health and Social Care Committee focus on women's health. WI members have passed a number of health-related resolutions over recent years which have highlighted the need to take more action on education and prevention. An overview of these areas is provided below.

NFWI-Wales is also a member of a third sector coalition developing a Women and Girls' Health Quality Statement for Wales. A Women and Girls' Health Plan has been published by the Scottish Government and the UK Government is consulting on a Women's Health Strategy for England. However there are no similar proposals by the Welsh Government. Once the third sector coalition has launched its Women and Girls' Health Quality Statement for Wales, we would like to see the Welsh Government and Local Health Boards commit to its implementation in collaboration with coalition members and patients. We would welcome the support of the Health and Social Care Committee for the Quality Statement and its recommendations.

## **Ovarian Cancer**

Ovarian cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in women, mainly affecting those who have been through the menopause. The earlier ovarian cancer is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat so public awareness and understanding of the symptoms is really important. One of the main challenges to ensuring that people see their GP early is that many women do not feel confident that they could spot a symptom of ovarian cancer.

NFWI-Wales believes that action is needed in Wales to increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer among both women and healthcare professionals to help ensure that women receive early treatment where necessary. We would like to see Public Health Wales take action to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer, for example, through high profile public awareness campaigns on TV, radio and social media.

## **Cervical screening**

Research launched by the NFWI in April 2021 to gather people's thoughts on the cervical screening programme in England and Wales found that there is a need for improved education and public awareness of HPV to address misunderstanding and stigma. 53% of respondents in Wales aged 25 to 64 were unaware that the screening programme had changed to HPV-first testing in 2018.

Our research also identified a number of barriers to cervical screening such as inconvenient appointment times, previous bad experiences, embarrassment and worries that it would be painful. 40% of respondents in Wales stated that if weekend appointments were available to them, they would be more likely to attend cervical screening and 44% would be more likely to attend if evening appointments were available. Where capacity and challenges of Covid-19 allow, we would like to see Local Health Boards consider strategies to help improve uptake of cervical screening.

Our research found that there was considerable support for the option of HPV self-sampling. In future, the offer of HPV self-sampling could help increase uptake of cervical screening and we would like to see Public Health Wales prioritising the trialling of HPV self-sampling in Wales. Once a strong evidence base is in place, HPV self-sampling should be introduced to the national screening programme in the most effective and accessible way as early as possible following approval by the UK National Screening Committee and Wales Screening Committee.

## **Mental Health**

We welcome the commitment in the Welsh Government's Programme for Government to 'prioritise investment in mental health'. We would like to see the Health and Social Care Committee scrutinising the Welsh Government on its delivery and investment in mental health to ensure that those who need support are able to access it.

The pandemic has undoubtedly brought with it unprecedented challenges and taken a toll on the mental health of the population. 35% of the 3,245 WI members who shared their views with the NFWI in a survey carried out over summer 2020 told us that Covid-19 had negatively impacted their mental health or wellbeing, and a further 13% had experienced difficulties accessing medical care in general.

We need to see parity between mental and physical health and better support for those who need it. Ensuring that people with mental health problems can access mental health treatment for as long as they need it and get the right care for their condition is vital. In addition, it is crucial that the stigma surrounding talking about mental health is addressed by improving public understanding of mental health problems so that it is as acceptable to talk about mental health issues as much as physical health issues.

Many WI members have caring responsibilities, including in relation to mental health, and for some this commitment has increased over the last 18 months, putting them under additional pressure. It must be ensured that unpaid carers of people with a mental health illness have access to the support they are entitled to and know where to access information and support. 17% of respondents to the NFWI survey said that they spent more time caring for others, and a further 5% said they had to organise remote support for someone vulnerable.