

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i'r ymgynghoriad ar y cyd a gynhelir gan y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) a'r [Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus](#) fel sail i'w [gwaith craffu ar Iechyd a Gofal Digidol Cymru](#)

This response was submitted to the joint consultation held by the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) and the [Public Accounts and Public Administration Committees](#) to inform their [scrutiny of Digital Health and Care Wales](#)

SDHCW 22

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Fferyllol Frenhinol | Response from: Royal Pharmaceutical Society Wales

Russel George MS & Mark Isherwood MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee & Chair, Public Accounts and Public Administration
Committee
Senedd Cymru

Consultation: Scrutiny of Digital Health and Care Wales

Dear Russell & Mark,

Thank you for this opportunity to support the committee's evidence gathering ahead of its scrutiny session with Digital Health and Care Wales. We hope that the information provided below proves useful for both committees ahead of the session.

In establishing a new special health authority such as DHCW, it can be expected that certain teething problems will be experienced in the early months and years when establishing governance procedures, establishing ways of working and recruiting staff. Furthermore, of course, coming into existence during a pandemic will also increase complexity.

However, from our perspective at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the clarity of DHCW plans and outputs from work to date has been positive. This has particularly been so in supporting and funding new developments and initiatives within pharmacy that has helped support the work of the profession across community pharmacy, general practice and hospitals.

Reflecting on [our consultation response to the Welsh Government's initial proposals to establish a new digital health authority in 2020](#), it's particularly pleasing that a number of our calls have now been implemented or are in the process of being implemented e.g. expanding pharmacy expertise within DHCW, improved sharing of health data and patient information across different professions and health settings, and the establishment of the ePrescribing Programme.

Below are some detailed thoughts on specific initiatives related to pharmacists and pharmacy:

Electronic prescribing

Introducing an electronic prescribing system in Wales has been a long-standing call from the RPS for a number of years. We're pleased that following the commitment to "introduce e-prescribing" in the current government's Programme for Government that significant progress has been made.

Following an independent review into ePrescribing in Wales there is now a plan in place to introduce ePrescribing throughout the lifecycle of a prescription to be delivered by DHCW and supported by health boards and trusts. Through our regular engagement with DHCW and the

Minister for Health and Social Services we are reassured the plan is robust and is on track to be delivered as possible within the stated 3-5 year timeline – enabled due to funding for the programme being prioritised in the Digital Priorities Investment Fund.

Once in place this system will be of huge benefits to pharmacists, the wider NHS and patients. Some of the benefits and developments include:

- Replacing paper prescription by electronic prescriptions, meaning prescriptions will be sent electronically from the prescriber directly to the pharmacy, removing un-needed burden from the patient, providing a clear audit trail of the status of a prescription and a more environmentally sustainable alternative for the future.
- Within hospitals it will introduce an electronic platform for prescriptions, as well as electronic drug charts that will simplify the administration of medicines.
- Implementing a central medicines data repository which will store the electronic prescription records issued, whether in primary or secondary care and regardless of where in Wales the prescription is issued.

Choose Pharmacy: Supporting more clinical services from community pharmacy

We've also been pleased with the ongoing development of the Choose Pharmacy IT platform for community pharmacies which is now in place in all accredited community pharmacies in Wales.

For a number of years this platform has underpinned the community pharmacy common ailment service. This service has had many benefits including enabling community pharmacy to be the first port of call for common ailments and reducing the workload of GPs and emergency departments.

Of specific relevance to this inquiry, crucially the platform delivered by DHCW has significantly reduced the administrative burden on community pharmacists and enabled better sharing of information across the health service. Some of the improvement in connectivity as a result of the platform include:

- Providing pharmacists with medication details within the patient's Welsh GP record, to help them make more informed decisions.
- Sharing summaries of pharmacy services consultation with GP practices for the common ailments, emergency medicines supply and seasonal flu services.

It should also be noted that during the pandemic, where community pharmacy was the only health setting that remained open offering face to face care and increased use of the common ailment service, the platform meant that patients were still able to receive treatment and GPs were kept abreast of their patients' care. DHCW demonstrated its ability to adapt during the pandemic, helping facilitate the roll out of a video consultation platform. This enabled pharmacists to provide e-consultations appropriately when face to face interaction was not the preferred option during the height of the pandemic.

Going forward, through continued investment in the platform we're confident that it will be able to underpin future developments for community pharmacy by providing pharmacies connectivity and the tools and information they need. This will be particularly important when considering

the new initiatives that will be introduced by way of the new community pharmacy contractual framework for Wales that will make greater use of the clinical skills of community pharmacists.

Ongoing funding for system maintenance, interoperability and refining

Building on our previous point, we would stress that ongoing investment in the maintenance of systems such as the choose pharmacy platform should be an important consideration in DHCW funding decisions. Likewise, investment in ensuring interoperability between newly developed systems and existing systems is equally important.

We know from our members working in practice and within DHCW that the twin costs of system maintenance and interoperability has previously too often not considered in the Welsh NHS after initial funding of projects. This risks systems not being fit for purpose or being less effective within a few years.

We would also encourage DHCW to continue to engage with the workforce who are regular users of their systems for feedback. Collaboration of this kind will hopefully lead to systems being refined so that they are as user friendly as possible.

New digital hospital pharmacy system

Another important new initiative has been the introduction of a new digital hospital pharmacy system. This DHCW led project was implemented during the pandemic and is now rolled out to all hospital pharmacies in Wales. It has enabled improved accuracy of computerised dispensing and medicines stock management across Wales.

Considering the huge cost of medicines to NHS Wales, this new system will help pharmacy teams to monitor how investment in medicines is utilised and to ensure efficient and cost-effective use of medicines.

Microsoft 365 for Community Pharmacists

We're pleased that DHCW have rolled out Microsoft 365 to all community pharmacists in Wales. This has been an important enabler to better connect community pharmacists with the rest of the NHS and to enable remote working.

DHCW Workforce

In our consultation response at the time of establishing DHCW, we called on the new body to

“increase the number of members of staff who can input from a pharmacist/pharmacy technician perspective. We fear that without further specialist pharmacy input to support the staff currently employed by NWIS, the aims of Pharmacy: Delivering a Healthier Wales will be severely limited”.

This was in order to enable the authority to deliver the aims of pharmacy's 10 year vision; [Pharmacy: Delivering a Healthier Wales](#).

Were pleased that this has indeed been the case with more pharmacists now employed within DHCW to help deliver the electronic prescribing programme and other initiatives. This has been a crucial enabling factor in the delivery of the initiatives discussed above. Going forward, it will be important to monitor this expertise level.

We hope that the information provided proves useful. If you require any clarifications of further information, please do get back in touch with us.

Kind regards

Dr Geraldine McCaffrey

Vice Chair, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Welsh Pharmacy Board