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Health Education and  
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**Addysg a Gwella Iechyd Cymru (AaGIC)**  
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Our Ref: JR/cw

Date: 9 June 2023

Russell George MS  
Chair  
Health & Social Care Committee

Sent by email via [SeneddHealth@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddHealth@senedd.wales)

Dear Russell

## Inquiry into Gynaecological Cancers

Thank you for your letter dated 17 May 2023 informing of the workforce related issues raised during the evidence session on 27 April. In our Chief Executive's absence, I have responded to each one in turn.

- 1. The Wales Cancer Improvement Plan says, "workforce planning needs to be better, including a greater understanding of the future workforce needs". Could you provide an update on the cancer workforce plan and specifically details of planning in relation to the gynaecological cancer workforce.**

The National Workforce Implementation Plan (NWIP) produced by Welsh Government recognises the importance of refining our longer-term approach to workforce planning within NHS Wales. There are a number of Strategic Workforce Plans in development as set out in the NWIP including the development of nursing workforce plan which incorporates all nurses working within NHS Wales.

Specifically on cancer services, we are working with the Wales Cancer Network (WCN) and have developed and tested a pathway workforce planning methodology for Health Boards to use which supports implementation of the Single Cancer Pathway and a guide and resources are now available. We are now focussing on the analysis of data in specific pathway areas including GI, Urology and Lung Cancer which will inform pathway planning and the identification of workforce solutions. As yet, we have not done any specific work in relation to gynaecological cancers, but this is something that we can consider as part of the forward work programme.

- 2. Data on the number of gynaecological cancer specialist nurses working in NHS Wales. We were also told that there is no supported educational pathways to allow qualified band 5 nurses to develop into cancer specialist nurses. Could you confirm whether that is the case.**

Regrettably, our national workforce reporting system, ESR, does not hold information at this level. NHS Wales is exploring opportunities to improve data quality in relation to specific job roles. We are



aware of a recent piece of work conducted by the Wales Cancer Network which attempted to capture data on the size and shape of the specialist workforce through a census. The dataset is not comprehensive, but it does provide a baseline provision and indicates that there are around 22 gynaecological cancer specialist nurses working in Wales currently. Given that one HB has not submitted data to the census, this under-represents the true position.

In terms of educational pathways, this is an area that we have prioritised within our Integrated Medium-Term Plan for 2023/24 and we will be working collaboratively with the Wales Cancer Network over the next two years to develop a competency framework for both nurses and allied health professionals supported with funding by Macmillan. This will include work to understand the future demand and capacity needed across a number of areas including the surgery and oncology cancer nursing workforce areas. Further information on education development is set out in response to point 5 below.

**3. Data on the number of consultant gynaecological oncologist posts, the number of vacant posts, and relevant number of consultant training posts by health board in Wales.**

We do not hold information on the number of consultant gynaecological oncologist posts and vacancies as this information will be held at a Health Board level. We can confirm that there are 77 trainees within the Obstetrics and Gynaecology specialty and a further 12 medical oncology and 27 clinical oncology trainees in Wales.

**4. We were told that many clinical nurse specialists are fast approaching retirement age. Has HEIW done any projections on the number of clinical nurse specialists who are likely to retire in the next 5-8 years and who will replace them/their expertise.**

The nursing workforce plan that is in development will consider the wider demand and supply side factors and this plan will provide the framework for the consideration of all nursing roles including those working within cancer services. As data on clinical nurse specialists is not specifically recorded within ESR we have not been able to undertake any detailed work on clinical nurse specialists yet. The recent piece of work conducted by the Wales Cancer Network on the data capture on the size and shape of the specialist workforce identified that approximately 44% of the Gynaecology specialist cancer nursing workforce were over the age of 50. However, as part of our work with the Wales Cancer Network we will seek to improve data capture in this area. In addition, within the NWIP there was a specific requirement for HEIW to work with partners to develop a national retention plan for nursing and we anticipate that this will be published in summer 2023.

**5. What access to training there is for new and experiencing nurses to become cancer nurse specialists.**

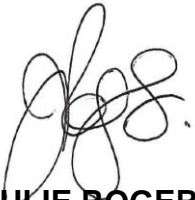
HEIW supports a range of professionals to develop and extend skills through our postgraduate funding route. Each year, we allocate a sum of £2.5m to Health Boards across Wales which supports registered staff in being able to undertake post-graduate training. A significant proportion of this funding supports individuals to undertake Advanced or Consultant level qualifications.

We have also recently reviewed our Advanced and Consultant level Practice Frameworks and a new Framework for Extended, Advanced and Consultant Level Clinical Practice in Wales is being launched in June 2023. This will provide a more flexible route for individuals to develop within their specialist areas and defines levels of practice, the education required at each level and how employers can provide governance and support to practitioners. Again, working with the Wales Cancer Network, we will ensure that this is aligned with the joint programme of work to be taken forward from 2023/24. In addition, we are finalising a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Strategy within HEIW and anticipate that this will be published in the summer of 2023.

A Career Pathway, Core Cancer Capabilities in Practice (CiP) and Education Framework for the Nursing and Allied Health Professions Cancer Workforce (the 'Framework') has recently been published as part of a UK wide programme called the Aspirant Cancer Career and Education Development programme (ACCEND). The ACCEND programme aims to provide transformational reform for the career pathways and associated education, training, learning and development opportunities for the nursing and allied health professional cancer workforce. As part of our joint programme of work with the Wales Cancer Network we will map the ACCEND framework against educational resources available with the aim of developing appropriate cancer educational resources in Wales.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Rogers', with a small dot at the end.

**JULIE ROGERS**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/  
DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE & OD**