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Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-150
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William Powell AM

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Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 7 May requesting an update on cancer services in Wales.

I would like to provide assurances around the suggested recommendations for improvement and I will address each of your points in turn.

Key Workers

Since 1 April 2011 policy in place states that anyone diagnosed with cancer in Wales should have access to a Key Worker. The policy has recently been reviewed by the Cancer Implementation Group and a key principles document on the role of Key Workers is being developed as a result.

Feedback

The first all Wales Cancer Patient Experience Survey is being run in the next few months. This survey will, for the first time, provide a full picture of patient experience and give quantitative and qualitative information to drive improvement in the Health Boards.

Distribution of Information

Public Health Wales has a responsibility for promoting messages to patients. I would encourage Breakthrough Breast Cancer to write to Public Health Wales in order to discuss the distribution of information.

Care Plans

It is a commitment in the Programme for Government that all cancer patients in Wales receive an individual care plan. The Cancer Implementation Group is looking at how care plans are used and how they can be improved to support the holistic needs of individual patients.

Carers

I recognise the need for support for carers and we will shortly be publishing a Carers Strategy for Wales following the consultation which closed in February.

Improved Access to GPs

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the accessibility of GP services for working people by ensuring appointments are available at times which are convenient to them.

A staged approach has been developed to ensure delivery of this commitment. The first phase has focused on ensuring adequate capacity and appropriate redistribution of appointments within contracted hours, including early morning and evening appointments between 5.00pm and 6.30pm. This, along with a further reduction in the number of practices with half day or lunchtime closing, has been the priority for 2012/13. Good progress has been made in the delivery of the first phase. Published GP access statistics for 2012 indicates that 94% of GP practices now offer appointments between 5.00pm and 6.30pm at least two week nights per week and the number of GP practices which were closed for half a day on one or more week days decreased from 19% in 2011 to 11% in 2012.

From April 2013, the second phase will focus on extending opening and access to appointments after 6.30pm. In addition, access to early morning appointments is also being addressed, particularly in rural areas for people who have long commutes. During 2014/15 the focus will be on enhancing access at the weekends. Work is currently underway to explore the potential models as part of the review on Out of Hours.

I hope this provides the information you were seeking.

Best wishes
Mark.

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