

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol/
Prif Weithredwr GIG Cymru
Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Director General Health and Social Services/
NHS Wales Chief Executive
Health and Social Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mrs Fay Buckle
Clerk
Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our Ref AG/KH

16 May 2016

Dear Mrs Buckle

The NHS Consultant Contract in Wales: progress with securing the intended benefits

I refer to Mr Darren Millar's letter of 18 March regarding Recommendation 9 of the above mentioned PAC report published in September 2013. The Welsh Government undertook to provide the Committee with annual updates on its work with health boards and the Wales Deanery to develop and implement specific strategies for recruiting specialist consultants to address workforce and expertise shortages. I am sorry it has taken until now to provide this first update.

Ultimately, responsibility for workforce planning and recruitment in NHS Wales sits with local health boards and trusts as they are best placed to ensure the services they plan are matched to patient needs – both now and in the future. The overall recruitment picture for medical and dental posts remains robust with 94.5% of posts currently filled. Recent figures show there are now 2,303 consultants working in the Welsh NHS – up 130 since 2011 and increasing by some 41.5% since 2005. However, we must recognise that the NHS in Wales faces some significant recruitment challenges in particular specialities. These challenges are not limited to Wales and similar issues are seen throughout the UK. Many of the vacant posts are in the specialties where there are recognised UK shortages.

Health boards and trusts in Wales are continuously taking steps to address the challenges of filling these vacancies. Alongside traditional methods of recruitment within the UK market, boards and trusts have, in addition:

- developed innovative solutions, such as the use of social media and by targeting potential candidates through the *Linked In* network; producing videos and using the existing workforce to outline the benefits of living and working in Wales. For example,

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board has developed a video to attract and recruit doctors, which builds on the national campaign *Work Train Live* (designed to attract junior doctors to train in Wales and developed collaboratively between the Welsh Government, NHS Wales and the Wales Deanery). Public Health Wales has also contributing to this agenda by developing a recruitment 'landing page' to promote the wider benefits of living and working in Wales;

- undertaken a range of overseas recruitment activities to recruit doctors into NHS Wales. These range from targeted recruitment campaigns to working with UK based medical recruitment agencies which source overseas doctors, and recruiting overseas doctors onto Medical Training Initiatives (MTI). Those health boards recruiting from overseas are putting in place measures to ensure support is provided for all consultants moving to Wales;
- engaged much more fully with social media and online advertising, as well as improving their online visibility and promoting Wales to the global medical community;
- developed new service roles and models, such as physicians' associates and advanced or extended practice roles;
- agreed to work collaboratively across health board boundaries; two key components of the nationally agreed programme are work streams on recruitment (this is wider than medical staffing and includes work on the national recruitment campaign for nurses outside of the UK) and medical staffing to help reduce.

The Welsh Government has set out clearly how a sustainable workforce should be achieved through the NHS Planning Framework. All boards and trusts are required to submit Integrated Medium Term Plans that evidence an understanding of their challenges and priorities, and the actions needed to achieve them in a financially sustainable way. During the passage of the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014 assurances were given by the Minister for Health and Social Services that plans would only be approved when they demonstrate a credible response to delivering local and national priorities.

The Welsh Government's role is also to scrutinise these plans, put in place an assurance process and to support organisations in the development of their plan where needed. Organisations are now in the third year of submitting plans and there has been ongoing improvement each year. From a workforce perspective IMTPs are expected to summarise priority actions for workforce redesign, restructuring, and new ways of working, identify improvements in safety and quality and cost improvement, demonstrate a clear read across from workforce information to financial information, identify areas of workforce risk to service delivery and set out actions to manage risk, identify centrally funded education and training requirements, demonstrate how priority performance indicators will be achieved and include clear links to accepted governance frameworks for adequate assurance of quality and safety.

While the process for identifying the required training places for non medical professions is a mature one which draws upon the IMTPs, the process for identifying the requirement for medical training posts is less mature. From this year a new tripartite (Welsh Government, Wales Deanery, health boards/trusts) approach to medical workforce staffing is being introduced which will identify the level of training posts required across Wales.

In 2014 a review of the arrangements in place to support the education and training of health professionals in NHS Wales was commissioned. The final report was submitted in March 2015 and published on 14 April 2015.


The panel made three key recommendations:

- The need for a refreshed strategic vision for NHS Wales for 2015-30, based on prudent healthcare, which should inform the strategy for the workforce;
- The development of NHS Wales' learning culture;
- The creation of a single body for workforce planning, development and commissioning of education and training.

Professor Robin Williams CBE, FRS, former vice chancellor of Swansea University, has agreed to undertake the work to scope the new single set of arrangements for Wales (including costs and benefits) which will bring together workforce planning, organisational development and commissioning of education and training across Wales.

Professor Williams is being supported by a small project team within the Welsh Government and has access to a small group of individuals with specialist knowledge in aspects of the NHS workforce, the delivery and design of education and training programmes and curriculum and regulation. Professor Williams will report to Ministers by the end of June 2016.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Goodall