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Ymchwiliad i'r Adolygiad Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Iechyd, Gofal Cymdeithasol a Chwaraeon

Inquiry into the Priorities for the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Ymateb gan: Coleg Brenhinol yr Ymarferwyr Cyffredinol

Response from: Royal College of General Practitioners

Royal College of GPs Wales' response to:

Priorities for the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee in the Fifth Assembly

Deadline: September 2, 2016.

RCGP Wales is a members organisation representing GPs and doctors who are training to be GPs from across Wales. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the priorities for the Welsh Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

We would like the Committee to prioritise the following areas:

1. Primary Care

RCGP Wales believes that primary care should be the top priority for the next Health, Social Care and Sports Committee.

Primary care, largely delivered by GPs and their staff but also including a wide variety of health and social care professionals, has been an enduring success of the NHS in Wales. It delivers nine out of ten patient contacts and provides accessible, high quality, personal care in familiar, local surroundings. More services are moving from secondary across into primary care but the associated resource is not moving in the same direction. The effectiveness and integrity of general practice is now under threat and barely sustainable. GP teams are struggling to cope with the demand and remain responsive to the needs of their patients and communities. Practices are closing or reducing services. Morale is low. More staff are needed and new models of care need to be explored whilst retaining the high quality and type of care patients value. It is absolutely vital that it is adequately resourced and supported.

If we are to help keep our patients out of hospital and care for them effectively in the community in which they live then we must focus on primary care.

2. Sport and public health

Secondly we would like sport and public health prioritised. In order to remain healthy it is absolutely necessary that people are equipped to care for themselves. Access to parks and recreational activities is vital and accessible information about the need to remain active and to eat a healthy diet is more important than ever.

Effective public health campaigns are proven to change people's lifestyles. Smoking and drink driving are examples of these. Public awareness of the need to manage our own health and be responsible for healthy eating habits and exercising would go a long way to improving the nation's health. We recognise that sport isn't just for athletes. Opportunities to take exercise or be physically active must be available to everyone. In particular we would like to see a greater collaboration between health, local authorities and national bodies to prioritise sport and activity in schools and communities with the provision of green spaces, leisure centres and cycling routes in both rural and urban areas

Public health campaigns need to be far reaching and accessible to all ages.

3. 3. NHS Efficiency

Improving efficiencies means that the NHS can provide better care for all patients in Wales. Efficiencies in transfer between general practice/primary care and hospitals need to be improved reduce waiting times for access to advice or treatment and quicker safer return to communities.. Technology needs to be utilised so that communication between sectors is more effective for example, duplication of investigations should be reduced by effective use of laboratory and radiology IT links for all relevant professionals to see results both from and in primary and secondary care.

4. Loneliness and Isolation in older people

Wales has an ageing population and many of those living longer are alone or isolated. Loneliness leads to depression and other mental health problems which in turn adversely impact on general health and wellbeing. It is vital that these people are identified, are linked into appropriate activities in their communities and receive timely health and social care. This is a whole community responsibility.

5. Integration of Health and Social Care

RCGP Wales believes that health and social care cannot be separated, particularly as Wales has some of the most deprived areas of the UK. Improving social care for patients can prevent admissions and speed discharge reducing expensive stays in hospital. There is still insufficient cooperation between care sectors arising from ingrained cultural differences and rigid funding boundaries with insufficient emphasis on patient centred care.

Good examples of cross-sectoral working(both statutory and voluntary) need to be shared and promoted. Patients need to be sign-posted to services more effectively. A Wales-wide online network would be a very important step in the right direction and GPs would benefit greatly from access to such a database of information.

6. Emergency services

Responsive emergency services are essential to maintaining access to urgent care. The ambulance service needs to be appropriately responsive guided by realistic and flexible targets. Paramedics have a bigger role to play in emergency and urgent care in the community and new ways of working with general practices and clusters need to be expanded. Effective transport must be supported by efficient A & E services which are appropriately used by the public and community clinicians. Currently there are still unacceptable delays in urgent transfers and long waiting times in A & E

which need resolving using a whole system approach. This includes looking at the role primary care can and does play in urgent care.

Finally, the Royal College of GPs Wales requests that the Committee holds an inquiry in the near future (next term if possible) to:

Assess the current state of general practice and evaluate what actions have been taken to date and actions needed to be taken to realise the aspirations of the Government's Primary Care Plan.