

Judith Paget
Director General Health/NHS Chief Executive
Welsh Government

10 December 2021

Dear Judith

Evidence session on 17 November

Thank you for attending the Committee meeting, along with your officials on 17 November. I have listed the action points arising from the meeting below.

- Social Care Wales

Albert Heaney agreed to provide additional details of the WeCareWales campaign. Please also provide evidence of key performance indicators that were used to measure the campaign's success.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Public Accounts Committee in Westminster has asked the UK Government to undertake a study to try and understand the link between the shortage of PPE and infections and deaths. Do you intend to undertake a similar study in Wales, and are you in dialogue with the UK Government about the findings of the above report.

Given the wide scope of the session we inevitably ran out of time to raise all of the issues we had identified. I would therefore welcome responses to the following:

Funding and Finances

1. Could you provide the latest monthly financial position for NHS bodies, and current forecasts for the year-end outturn.
2. How has the Welsh Government set about prioritising across health and social care the £1 billion that it has previously committed to invest to support recovery.

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

PPE Stock levels

In the private consideration of the evidence received, Members asked for further clarity on:

3. The method by which the Welsh Government publishes information on PPE stock levels. The Auditor General's report recommended this should be done on RAG rating basis rather than specific stock levels. Has the Welsh Government rejected this recommendation and does the approach taken provide the necessary assurances around stock levels?
4. How does the health service ensure that the most appropriate PPE is being provided for each setting?

We remain concerned that during the early stages of the pandemic there were shortages of appropriate PPE which contributed to the transmission of COVID-19 in hospital settings. We were not convinced by the explanations provided to us during the evidence session that lessons have been learnt in this area. We seek further assurances that in terms of the supply of PPE the NHS in Wales would be prepared for further waves of this pandemic or indeed any future pandemics.

Covid deaths for Health Boards

5. How many patients have contracted COVID-19 while in hospital? Please could you set out this information on a month by month basis since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.
6. How many deaths, per Health Board, have been attributable to patients who 'probably' or 'definitely' contracted COVID-19 while in a hospital setting?

Vaccine equity

7. Provide detail on the actions being taken to address the clear gap that still exists with uptake of vaccinations in people of certain ethnic backgrounds and whether this gap is resulting in more people from those ethnic backgrounds becoming seriously ill with Covid and being admitted to hospital.

Vaccine Workforce

8. What are health boards doing to "optimise their recruitment and workforce models over the autumn and winter period", as referenced in the latest Welsh Government strategy update.
9. To what extent are health boards experiencing problems in securing the workforce resources they need to maintain vaccine roll out in the context of the current wider pressures on the NHS in Wales.

Cross border issues

10. Are you aware of any cross-border problems that have occurred because of the different approaches to vaccine roll out and IT systems in England and Wales, and in particular where data recorded in English vaccine centres is now flowing into the Welsh GP records for patients registered with a Welsh GP.

Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee Governance Arrangements

In addition, I would also like responses on the following areas concerning the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee Governance Arrangements, which have arisen from the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's report, published in May 2021.

Recommendation 5 – I am aware recruitment around an Independent Member is already in hand but wish to receive details of the recruitment together with the appointment, when made.

Recommendation 6 – This recommendation was aimed at strengthening the end-to-end programme management of new specialist services to avoid overly long elapsed timeframes. Welsh Government's response indicates that the implementation of a new National Clinical Framework would help address matters but does not provide any detail on how that will be achieved in practice. The Committee would be grateful to receive clarification on this point.

Recommendation 7 – This recommendation prompted Welsh Government to review the operating model for WHSSC given the inherent conflicts of interest that lie within the current arrangements. The recommendation was accepted in principle and indicated a role for the proposed NHS Executive function in strengthening current arrangements. The response also indicated that the thinking on the NHS Executive was still being developed. Please clarify the plans for the NHS Executive and how it is believed that these plans will resolve the issues identified in the report.

Finally, in relation to the following Auditor General reports that were discussed during our evidence session on 17 November, please address the following points:

In reference to the Procuring and Supplying PPE for the COVID-19 Pandemic Report please provide a written update on the actions now taken in response to the recommendations, including further details on the procurement plan and the expectations that Welsh Government is now putting on potential suppliers. Please include details of the clear outcomes from the work of the PPE workstream of the UK emergency preparedness advisory board.

The Auditor General's Report on the Rollout of the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme in Wales did not make specific recommendations. Please provide an update on what the Welsh Government is doing in response to the other issues identified in the final section of the report on the "future challenges and opportunities" for the vaccination programme in Wales. Specifically, please also address these issues:

- The Welsh Government's progress with developing a longer-term plan for the vaccine rollout programme in Wales, in the context of evolving scientific advice and political decisions on use of booster doses and extending vaccines to younger age groups, and dovetailing COVID-19 vaccinations with immunisation against influenza;
- The extent to which programme oversight and governance arrangements have been rationalised;
- Approaches to increase vaccine take up in those age, ethnic and demographic groups where take-up rates are lower;

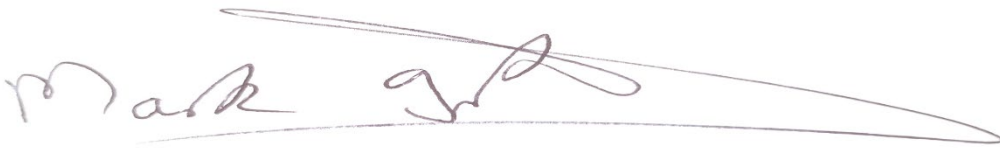


- Action being taken to maintain a sustainable and resilient workforce to deliver vaccines in the context of the ongoing and increasing pressures on NHS services; and
- Strategies to ensure availability of suitable premises for further mass vaccination, and action to ensure these are used efficiently and with minimal vaccine wastage.

I would welcome your response by 31 January 2022.

Thank you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Isherwood', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Isherwood MS
Committee Chair