

P-06-1220 Increase funding available for Women's Health Services, Education and Awareness

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Ionawr 2022
Petitions Committee | 10 January 2022

Reference: SR21/1251-4

Petition Number: [P-06-1220](#)

Petition title: Increase funding available for Women's Health Services, Education and Awareness

Text of petition:

Increase funding available for primary and secondary care relating to women's health issues, as well as research, education and public awareness.

Examples of issues include:

Perinatal issues, birth injuries, prolapse, fibroids, endometrioses, menopause related, period related, and the impact on mental health that couples these issues.

Areas which could benefit (examples, not limited to): Midwifery, GPs, Gynaecology, Women's Health Physiotherapy, Mental health services (eg counselling).



1. Background

In 2018, Chwarae Teg carried out a [review of gender equality](#), commissioned by the then Welsh Government. In relation to **women's health**, the [Roadmap for Wales](#), produced as part of the review, states:

While women live longer, they face more health issues throughout their lives and there is often a lack of understanding of specific health issues experienced by women and girls. This is an issue that affects women at all stages of their lives and can have a notable impact on their ability to engage fully in education, training, and employment and have negative impacts on overall well-being.

The review found that access to specialist services such as midwifery, abortion, miscarriage, and other gynaecological services was a critical concern among stakeholders.

Following the review, the Welsh Government published a cross-portfolio [gender equality action plan](#) in March 2020. This included actions relating to:

- period dignity;
- pregnancy loss clinics;
- health boards' compliance with NICE guidelines on miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy;
- implementing the [five year vision for maternity care in Wales 2019-2024](#).

The lack of a specific 'women and girls' health plan in Wales was highlighted by a number of respondents to the Health, Social Care and Sport's Committee's recent [consultation on priorities](#) for the Sixth Senedd. Stakeholders called for the Committee's support to put women's health-related priorities on the Welsh Government's agenda, including a focus on access to healthcare and health outcomes, and taking a life-course approach to women's health that extends beyond the traditional focus on maternity. Specific issues highlighted include endometriosis, menopause, perinatal mental health, contraception, abortion, miscarriage support, fertility, and cervical screening.

Elsewhere in the UK

Scotland is the first country in the UK to have a [Women's Health Plan](#). The Plan, published in August 2021, aims to raise awareness around women's health,

improve access to health care, and reduce inequalities in health outcomes for girls and women, both for sex-specific conditions and in women's general health.

Earlier this year, the UK Government [consulted on a Women's Health Strategy](#) for England. Responses to the consultation are currently being analysed.

2. Welsh Government response

The Welsh Government's response to the Petition's Committee (16 November 2021) states:

The improvement of health services for women has remained a priority for successive Governments in Wales. It is essential our health services offer advice and care to girls and women across the course of their lives and delivers a model of care that provides support to enable women to remain healthy throughout their lives.

It highlights the role of the ministerially-directed [Women's Health Implementation Group \(WHIG\)](#) in addressing women's health issues. WHIG was originally established in March 2018 to consider a report into the use of synthetic tape and mesh for stress urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. The Group's remit was subsequently expanded to include consideration of two other reports, on endometriosis and faecal incontinence. The Welsh Government says:

Since its establishment, the WHIG has been allocated £1million per year from Welsh Government. This money has been used to fund the programme manager and to establish a network of pelvic health and well-being coordinators in each health board. More recently it has allowed for the recruitment of a network of specialist endometriosis nurses in each health board as well as a range of other activities.

The Welsh Government's response also includes reference to its work in relation to period dignity, menopause, and perinatal mental health.

It notes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gynaecology provision (and in general across the NHS), describing 'substantial disruption' to services and significantly increased waiting times for many women. It refers to its [recovery plan for the NHS in Wales](#) (published March 2021), and states that although gynaecological services are not specifically referenced, there is an expectation that all health services will reflect the changes set out in the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.