

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [rhyddhau cleifion o ysbytai ac effaith hynny ar y llif cleifion drwy ysbytai](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Hospital discharge and its impact on patient flow through hospitals](#)

HD 14

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Cymorth Canser Macmillan | Macmillan Cancer Support

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Russell George MS  
Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
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Thursday 6 January 2022

Dear Chair,

Macmillan Cancer Support was very pleased to see the Committee announce plans to consider how patient flow through Welsh hospitals can be improved in the future. We agree on the impact that improving patient flow and discharge processes can have on improving quality of care for patients and reducing pressure on NHS services. In response to your current consultation, please see below for some information relating to cancer services and patient flow that we hope will be helpful for the Committee.

### **The importance of acute oncology services**

Acute oncology services play a hugely important role in supporting people with cancer who are acutely unwell. They provide specialist support to people with a complication resulting from their cancer or their cancer treatment, which can often mean serious medical emergencies such as neutropenic sepsis or metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC). They also provide support and advice when a person is diagnosed with a new or suspected cancer following an emergency admission to hospital. Benefits of having an acute oncology service in place include improved safety and quality of care, better and faster coordination between teams, and clearer communication for patients and their loved ones.

In addition to these benefits, having high-quality acute oncology services in place can have a significant impact in reducing a patient's length of stay in hospital. Previous studies carried out in England [have suggested](#) a lower average length of stay for cancer patients following the introduction of an acute oncology service in hospitals. Acute oncology services can also help to avoid unnecessary admissions altogether by providing advice and patient safety netting to facilitate same-day discharge. We welcomed the Welsh Government's commitment in its quality statement for cancer that all acute hospitals in Wales should have fully integrated acute oncology services, and we hope to see this delivered as quickly as possible.

### **Greater investment in community palliative and end of life care**

We know that during the pandemic, more people than usual have been dying at home as opposed to in hospital or other care settings. Between March and September 2020, England and Wales saw a one-third increase in the number of people dying at home compared to pre-pandemic levels, with the majority of these deaths unrelated to coronavirus. A lack of resource and capacity in community care to respond to this shift makes it incredibly difficult for professionals to meet the demand for palliative and end of life care at home.

Evidence [also suggests](#) that better access to community-based end of life care can result in fewer emergency admissions and reduced length of stay in hospitals, with a direct impact on patient flow and pressures on hospital services. We hope to see a greater focus and level of investment in community-based end of life care from the Welsh Government over the coming years.

### **Advance and future care planning**

Advance and future care planning is a term used to describe conversations between a person and those involved in their care about their future wishes and care preferences. It gives people the chance to record what is important to them and their hopes, wishes and fears for the future, and is central in ensuring that health and care professionals and loved ones understand a person's preferences. There are several benefits to this - for instance, we know that when staff have a record of where someone would like to die, that person is almost twice as likely to do so. Advance and future care planning can also play a critical role in reducing the likelihood of potentially painful or traumatic emergency care admissions in a person's final months.

Linked to this is Compassionate Cymru - formerly Byw Nawr - and the Welsh Government's ambition for Wales to become the world's first "compassionate country". Supporting people with their health and social care needs must not be the sole responsibility of statutory services, and there are ways in which communities can support people as well. Evidence from effective compassionate community initiatives have enabled better support for people being discharged from hospital - for instance through compassionate neighbours who can look in on people in their area or through to home-from-hospital boxes to support people when they return home. This kind of community-led support has the potential to help keep more people well and to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospitals.

I hope the above information is helpful for Members of the Committee. Should you require any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,