



Russell George MS
Chair
Health and Social Care Committee

Russell.George@senedd.wales

10 July 2023

Dear Russell

Thank you for your letter of 16 June 2023 in relation to the Health and Social Committee report on Dentistry. I will address the specific points made in your letter below:

Recommendation 3: The Welsh Government should explore options for a centralised waiting list and report back to the Committee on progress by the end of 2023. As an interim measure, the Welsh Government should ensure every health board establishes a centralised waiting list for its area by the end of 2023.

1. *Can you please clarify when a centralised waiting list will be delivered.*

I share your belief in the importance of creating a centralised waiting list as soon as possible. My officials continue to work with Digital Health and Care Wales on this and I can confirm that the aim is for this to be completed by the end of this financial year.

Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government should review the data collection requirements for NHS dentists in order to simplify the process and reduce duplication. This review should be completed by December 2023 and the findings reported back to us no later than March 2024.

2. *Can you please confirm that you will report back to the Committee with the group's findings within the timescales specified in our recommendations.*

This recommendation will be discussed as part of the negotiations about the new contract. Whilst I am unable to go into the details of what will be discussed, I can confirm that the use of the Assessment of Clinical Oral Risk and Needs (ACORN), the data it generates and the time associated with its use will definitely be discussed as part of the negotiations. Work is proceeding to enable negotiations on the new contract to begin as soon as possible.

Recommendation 8: The Welsh Government should ensure that the dental workforce strategy reflects the changing aspirations and the need for a wider skill mix within the workforce and is published as soon as possible. On the basis that the Minister for

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Eluned.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Eluned.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Health and Social Services expected to receive the draft in December 2022, the final strategy should be published no later than spring 2023.

- 3. Can you please provide further details on the content of the workforce plan and whether it reflects the changing aspirations and the need for a wider skill mix within the workforce as set out in our recommendation.*

As I indicated during the debate on 21st June, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) is currently developing a workforce plan for dentistry that will focus not just on growing the workforce, but also on retention. Earlier this year I published a national workforce implementation plan, which needed to be published first. This commits to delivering a strategic workforce plan for dentistry by the end of the financial year.

The plan is very much being developed on the basis that skill-mix can play a significant role in the provision of NHS dental care. With regulatory barrier now removed that was preventing dental therapists in particular opening and closing courses of treatment this is a section of the dental workforce we need to invest in. The number of dental therapy places at Cardiff University will increase from 11 to 18 from this September and up to 24 from September 2024. HEIW have also put a 1-year foundation programme in place for new dental therapy graduates which will support them in the early stages of their NHS career.

The workforce plan is key to identify the training numbers we need for the future but we won't wait for that if opportunities to increase training numbers present themselves earlier.

Recommendation 9: The Welsh Government should bring forward the legislative changes needed to enable dental therapists to have a performer number as a matter of urgency, and provide us with a timescale for this.

- 4. Can you please confirm whether dental therapists no longer need to have a performer number to open and close courses of treatment.*
- 5. Can you also clarify what is meant by 'next financial year'. It will the change take effect from April 2024.*

We have recently unblocked the perceived regulatory issue that was preventing dental therapists, hygienists and clinical dental technicians playing a full role in NHS care. Since April 2023, these dental professionals are now able to open and close courses of NHS treatment which increases the capacity of the existing workforce. This has been done without the need to issue these members of the dental team with a performer number.

Recommendation 14: The Welsh Government should explore options for expanding the Gwen am Byth (GAB) programme into other residential settings, such as care homes for younger vulnerable people, sheltered housing and extra care housing, and report back on its findings to this Committee by the end of 2023.

- 6. Can you please provide details of which health boards are being referred to, and of the number and type of settings?*

I have been informed that Betsi Cadwaladr UHB provides domiciliary services for people living in their own homes as well as in care home settings. A comprehensive service is offered to people with Special Care Needs and there are local Oral Health Promotion Programmes for children and adults with Learning Disabilities.

The Swansea Bay UHB GAB team have designed a training programme for domiciliary care staff and have trained over 85 staff to date. The team also engages with District Nurses.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg have some care homes that offer sheltered housing alongside normal care home services and these are involved with GAB. There is also a care home which has a unit for younger adults who are included within the GAB programme.

In the Bridgend area the GAB team also deliver mouthcare training for supported living settings which provide care for younger adults. They also provide sessions for the council run domiciliary sector across Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

In Powys, other residential settings are able to access the Community Dental Service Domiciliary service.

7. Can you also confirm what plans the Welsh Government has to expand the Gwen am Byth programme in the remaining health boards.

Our current focus is re-establishing the GAB programme following the hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Any further expansion would require additional funding and personnel both of which are very challenging at the moment.

I hope you find this update helpful. If the committee would find it useful, I can provide an update on all recommendations being worked on during the course of the autumn term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services