

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 29TH JANUARY 2025

TIME: 12PM – 1.30PM, **LOCATION:** COMMITTEE ROOM A, TY HYWEL AND MS TEAMS

PRESENT (SENEDD): Jenny Rathbone MS (Chair); Joyce Watson MS; Sioned Williams MS; Bronwen Davies – Abortion Rights Cardiff; Viv Rose – BPAS; Andrew McMullan – BPAS; Julie Richards – RCM; Bianca Armitage – RCM; Dr Helen Munro – NHS Executive Wales; Sian Griffiths – FTWW; Helen Parry – NYAS;

PRESENT (ONLINE): Sarah Murphy MS; Dr Amanda Davies – Swansea Bay UHB; Alan Treharne – NHS Wales; Kate Martin – NHS Wales; Debbie Shaffer – FTWW; Joanne Jones – NHS Wales; Liz Breun – NHS Wales; Joanne Kitt – NHS Wales; Carmel Bagness – RCN; Dee Montague-Coast – FTWW; Isabel Linton – FTWW; Valerie Billingham – Older People's Commission Wales; Elizabeth Evans – NHS Wales; Chrissie Boreham – NHS Wales; Cathy Larkman – WRN Wales; Mathew Norman – Diabetes UK; Heatherjane Dangerfield – Endometriosis UK; Kirsty Rees – Welsh Senedd; Sarah Hatherley – Welsh Senedd; Libby Humphris – Cardiff University; Sharon Beward – NHS Wales; Joanne Pugh – FTWW; Lydia Evans – FTWW; Helen Evans – NHS Wales; Carla Pothecary – NHS Wales; Emma Williams-Tully – Campaigner; Dawn Owen – FTWW; Dalila Tremarias – FTWW; Lisa Nicholls – FTWW; Eryl Jones – FTWW; Catherine Stace – NHS Wales; Donna Davies – FTWW; Alison Scouller – Socialist Health Association Cymru; Rachel Joseph – Cardiff University; Menaka Kodur – Women Connect First; Robyn Jackowich – Cardiff University; Bronwen Morgan-Jones – BHF; Lizzy Brothers – Plan UK; Krishna Patel – Cavendish Consulting; Bec Miller – Asthma and Lung UK; Bethan Edwards – BHF; Lara Morris – NASUWT; Jacky Boivin – Cardiff University; Sue Channon – Cardiff University; Gabriella Pearson – Menstrual Health Project; Anna Cooper – Menstrual Health Project; Jo Campion – Endometriosis UK; Jan Russell – WAMES; Sofia Gameiro – Cardiff University; Hodan Hersi – WAN Cymru; Katharine Gale – FluxState; Pauline Brelsford – Abortion Rights Cardiff; Polly Winn – RNID; Rachael Clarke – BPAS; Caroline Olszewsky – Lupus UK; Janine Hale – Welsh Government; Lucy Ward - BPAS

APOLOGIES: Delyth Jewell MS

1. WELCOME, MINUTES, MATTERS ARISING, AND AGM

Minutes: Minutes accepted.

AGM: Annual Report accepted as accurate. Jenny Rathbone MS elected Chair, BPAS and FTWW elected Co-Secretariats.

2. PUBLICATION OF THE WOMEN'S HEALTH PLAN

Remarks by Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Sarah Murphy MS

- Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked attendees for coming along to learn more about the publication of Wales' first Women's Health Plan
- Minister outlined that the plan is very different in terms of what the Welsh Government would usually publish as this is NHS-led
- Minister described the Women's Health Plan which is a 10-year vision to improve healthcare services for women across Wales - with nearly 60 actions across eight priority areas
- Minister stated that she knows there are frustrations over certain aspects of women's health and she hopes to reassure people as much as possible that the Welsh Government are listening and ready to act over the duration of the meeting

3. OPEN DISCUSSION

Questions were raised surrounding the collection of data within women's health and whether gender and sex was conflated by the NHS. There was also a question about whether the Welsh Government and NHS collect statistics on trans healthcare.

- Minister stated digital healthcare and data collection is part of her portfolio and that there is a lot more work to be done as the data we currently have is not adequate for the decisions we need to be making
- Minister stated that work on an Electronic Health Record (EHR) is being led by Betsi and Cwm Taf Health Boards and that this will ensure consistency of data collection
- Minister also described work being done on an NHS app which will enable better education and accountability, and will be a tool for patients to get information on side effects
- Minister assured the group that questions and comments will be fed back and answers will be found out

Questions around menstrual health:

- a) Mandatory menstrual health education in schools, as schools in North Wales voiced the need for extra support around comprehensive education about what would be abnormal and require further investigation for menstruation
- b) Whether the new curriculum in schools meant that menstrual health education would be more comprehensive and teach children about conditions like endometriosis

- Minister thanked participants for sharing their own experiences and said that she knew how hard it was to access support as a young person who may not know that their menstrual experience requires further investigation or intervention
- Minister stated that work is ongoing with the Health Secretary at present to improve education around conditions like endometriosis and PMDD in schools
- Minister committed to raising this with local boards to ensure that this is being prioritised

Endometriosis: Health hubs and endometriosis clinics were raised to ask how specifically they will help women with endometriosis. The delays in diagnosis and treatment were also raised. The Minister was asked whether there could be leniency with cross-border referrals for conditions like endometriosis and what can be done in the interim of the longer term policy goals of bringing down waiting times to help women who are suffering now. It was also asked why one of the long term goals in the plan is a scoping exercise and whether we could progress that quicker.

- Minister stated that she secured an additional £3 million for hubs from April 2025 which means that there will be a timeline and actions attached to improving endometriosis services
- Minister stated that the NHS needed to take ownership over the goals in the plan, and that the government would support them as much as possible
- Minister stated that at the moment the scoping exercise is long term because they want to ensure equity of services for women across the whole of Wales, and the services that are already there need to be taken into account. The ultimate goal they are working on is making sure that everyone can access care as close to home as possible
- Minister's Official stated that discussions are ongoing with the Joint Commissioning Committee to have endometriosis tertiary care as a specialised service as there are only centres in Cardiff and Swansea and we need to make sure that they are extended across the whole of the country

Questions around abortion care in Wales, specifically around the long term goal in the plan to commission second trimester surgical services and complex placements. BPAS raised that a letter sent in June 2019 promised change but that we have waited six years since then and now have to wait between another six and 10 years under this plan meaning that thousands of women have had to travel outside of Wales or continue with unwanted pregnancies. Abortion care access in Wales is now the worst in the UK and this should be prioritised.

- Minister said she was shocked to discover the issues with access to mid-trimester and surgical abortion care in Wales and said the government is looking at all potential options for bringing down the 6-10 years goal
- Minister thanked BPAS for all the work that they do, will raise it when she meets the Board, and has suggested that BPAS and herself meet to discuss this issue further

Support for women who have children whilst in the care system. Example of a young woman in care who has a child removed was described. Why she is not guaranteed to get a follow up post-natal appointment or contraception.

- Minister was sorry to hear of the example and said she would feed them back to the Board to make sure that all care-experienced women are being supported well following a birth

Contraception in women's health hubs and why services available at each hub is being left to the discretion of individual doctors. Participant asked whether the Welsh Government could play more of a role in describing exactly what the health hubs are meant to look like so that they don't just become well-funded sexual health clinics, but actually provide a range of services out with sexual health.

- Minister stated that the NHS are leading on this so they will be the primary point of contact for those setting up the hubs. Stated that partnerships are working well and the services are embedded in lived experiences but that she would raise this with the Board

Questions around pre-conception care and whether this would be prioritised by the government as it brings the health – both physical and mental – of future populations into focus.

- Minister agreed that it was of crucial importance and that the Royal Colleges have played a crucial role and been a key stakeholder in educating women and empowering them to make good choices, as well as holding the system accountable

Minister was asked how updates about work being done would be fed back to the public.

- Dr Helen Munro stated that a website will be launched imminently and will be updated regularly on short, medium, and long term goals. Dr Munro also stated that there will be workshop events coming up so that key priorities for short term goals can be worked on with the sector to ensure that they are delivered

4. AOB

- It was suggested that we invite the Chair of the NHS Executive, Sue Tranta to the next meeting

NEXT MEETING: TBC