

Response to the Public Accounts Committee Report on Implementation of the National Framework for Continuing NHS Healthcare: Follow Up Report

We welcome the report and our response to the specific recommendations are as follows. Welsh Government will provide the Committee with an update on all recommendations before the summer recess.

Recommendation 1 – The Committee recommends that, to ensure confidence in the quality and consistency of decisions on continuing healthcare funding awards, the annual audit samples of all Health Boards should be undertaken independently, by the same team.

Accepted

The annual audit samples (due in September 2015 and on an annual basis thereafter) will be undertaken by a central team. The audits are expected to take one month to complete.

Recommendation 2 – The Welsh Government should provide the Committee with details of the outcomes and findings from the on-going review of cases with learning disabilities, which is concluding in March 2015.

Accepted

Welsh Government will provide the Committee with the findings of this review by summer recess.

Recommendation 3 - The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government continues to monitor Health Boards' progress in processing retrospective claims and if necessary, refer claims not processed within the prescribed deadline to the Powys Project and provides the Committee with an update before the summer recess.

Accepted

Welsh Government will be continuing to monitor progress in relation to retrospective claims. Information is monitored on a monthly basis. The National Complex Care Board which is jointly chaired by the Director of Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government and the Chief Executive of Powys teaching Health Board, will receive regular reports at each meeting. It has been agreed that the retrospective claims for Phase 2 will be transferred to the National Powys Project. The process has been agreed and work is underway.

Recommendation 4 - The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government reports to the Committee before the summer recess on the expansion of the local and national recruitment programme and whether this has led to improvements in the time taken to process current and future claims.

Accepted

Welsh Government will request that local health boards provide information on staffing numbers in handling CHC claims. This will include updates as and when staff numbers change, Welsh Government receives monthly information in relation to the handling of claims. The National Complex Care Board will receive an update report at each meeting. Welsh Government will provide an update to the Committee as requested.

Recommendation 5 - The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government monitors Health Boards to ensure that the shorter processing deadline for more recent claims does not result in unintended consequences of longer resolution times for long-standing claims which are unresolved.

Accepted

Welsh Government will continue to monitor progress on a monthly basis in relation to all claims. The National Complex Care Board will receive regular reports at each meeting.

Recommendation 6 - The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government ensures that governance arrangements are clear and well understood in relation to complex care. This will include monitoring the effectiveness of such arrangements and the engagement of members of the National Complex Care Board and any task and finish groups which support its work.

Accepted

The Governance and Accountability Framework has been considered and formally approved by each local health board and Welsh Government. This resulted in the formation of the National Complex Care Board and The National Stakeholder Reference Group. The Board is jointly chaired by the Director of Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government and the Chief Executive of Powys teaching Health Board has been established. The Reference Group is chaired by the Director of Social Services and Integration. Details of the membership and terms of reference will be provided to the Committee by summer recess. An initial meeting of the group has been held and the terms of reference for the group are now being agreed. Attendance at meetings will be monitored and the Chairs will raise any concerns with the Chief Executives of local health boards as necessary.

Recommendation 7 - *In addition to the current leaflets that are designed to be accessed once an individual is 'in the system'; the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government publishes a general public information leaflet on continuing health care. These leaflets should be shared with health and social care professionals and distributed widely, including being made available in doctors' surgeries.*

Accepted

Additional copies of the Public Information Leaflet will be sent to each local health board for distribution to local care homes in May. Welsh Government will also be providing local health boards with a minimum standard distribution list to ensure the leaflets are widely available, this will include GP surgeries.

This leaflet, as well as other publicity and information material is also available on the Welsh Government web page and the jointly owned NHS and Welsh Government Complex Care and Information Support Site.

Recommendation 8 - *The Committee recommends that mandatory guidance is issued to Health Boards and social care providers on where information in relation to continuing health care should be made available. This should include the provision of information to individuals (and/or their family members) who are in, or prior to admission into a care home, including details of how the Decision Support Tool is applied to individuals being assessed for Continuing Healthcare.*

Accepted

Welsh Government will provide local health boards with mandatory guidance. This will include a minimum standard distribution list to ensure the leaflets are widely available. A set of Frequently Asked Questions have been provided for practitioners. These refer to the use and application of the Decision Support Tool. Additional copies of the Public Information Leaflet will be sent to each local health board for distribution to local care homes. Welsh Government will develop posters by autumn and request that local health boards distribute posters signposting to the Welsh Government website, where the leaflet and relevant information, including information on the decision support tool is available.

Recommendation 9 - The Committee remains concerned about the awareness, quality and level of provision of advocacy services provided by different Local Health Boards and is supportive of patients and carers understanding their options and the decision-making process as well as healthcare professionals. The Committee recommends the Welsh Government reports to the Committee before the summer recess, on how it intends to improve the consistency, quality and awareness of advocacy services.

Accept

Welsh Government will report to the Committee as requested. Welsh Government has asked local health boards for the position on advocacy in their area. We will be reviewing this to ensure it is appropriate and will agree further action to address issues where required. An update will be provided to Committee before summer recess clearly setting out how Welsh Government will ensure this recommendation is delivered.