



Ein cyf/Our ref: RE/508/21

Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair, Finance Committee
Senedd Cymru

11 March 2021

Dear Llyr,

I agreed to provide the Committee with further detail on the work being undertaken to improve information sharing between primary and secondary health care services and on the Local Authority Hardship Fund, specifically the formula relating to local authority lost savings as a result of the pandemic.

Information Sharing between Primary and Secondary Health Care Services

Welsh Clinical Portal (WCP) is the national software providing access to the patient digital health and care record. Over 27,000 users across NHS Wales have access to over 3 million GP summary records, more than 191 million tests results and more than 34 million care records. Read and write functionality reduces the dependency on the paper medical record.

All secondary care clinicians are able to access the GP Summary record with the ability to view the medication record, key diagnoses etc., using WCP. Therefore, when a patient presents in an unscheduled care environment or via planned care this information is readily available. Current access rates are in excess of 42,000 a month across Wales.

All GPs can access WCP - over 50% of all GPs have registered and done so - where they can see information relating to secondary care e.g. all pathology and radiology results.

All GP elective referrals are sent electronically to secondary care via the Welsh Clinical Communication Gateway – more than 20,000 each month - and this gateway also enables letters to be sent electronically back to GP Practices for inclusion in the GP record. This process will also soon be enhanced to enable advice to be sought from secondary care, potentially reducing the need for face to face patient consultations in hospitals.

Community pharmacies now have access to elements of the record to support initiatives like discharge medication review, ensuring patient medication regimes are optimised, further enhancing services available in this area such as the common ailments service. This diverts demand away from GP surgeries creating capacity for things that only GPs can do.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Rebecca.Evans@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru

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.

There is now also an All Wales Dental Referral system enabling electronic transfer of referrals from dentists into secondary care services.

The Primary Care information portal provides GPs & Clusters with summary and detailed views of primary care information and has now also been used to share vaccine information with GP practices - crucial in ensuring that this critical programme has been managed as effectively as possible, for example sharing views on, vaccinated patients; unvaccinated but booked for a vaccine; unvaccinated and not booked.

Access to the Shielded Patient List ensures that both primary and secondary care clinicians are able to review and add to this list to ensure that extremely clinically vulnerable patients are identified.

The digital response to the pandemic has been delivered at a national scale. All of these key services have been delivered as all-Wales digital platforms:

- Video consultation across all of primary and secondary care;
- Remote working for all NHS staff;
- Contact tracing;
- Vaccine delivery.

Last summer, over half of appointments were using telephone and video consultation and through the winter over a third of appointments. There have been more than 130,000 appointments since the start of the pandemic and currently there are over 5000 video consultation appointments every week.

The digital vaccines system has recorded over a million vaccines since the autumn. All of our contact tracing across Wales is delivered by local authority and NHS employed teams using a single system. All of our Covid test results flow through our national digital systems and feed into the contact tracing system and the electronic health record, including in primary care.

We have invested over £40m since 2019 in our digital infrastructure across Wales, strengthening networks, increasing bandwidth, and providing 1000s of new mobile devices. This is an important part of ensuring that large scale changes can be rolled out more quickly, as they were in response to the pandemic.

Learning and good practice have been rolled out quickly within new national systems, which have been delivered using an agile digital approach and short 4-6 week upgrade cycles. Several programmes have been scaled from regional to national, using local learning to develop the approach before delivering across Wales.

We are investing in structured approaches to sharing learning and scaling up good practice, for example:

- a 'deep dive' review of digital transformation
- a review of innovation and an all-Wales network of 'Research Innovation and Improvement Co-ordination Hubs'
- Three new 'Innovation Learning Academies', focussed on 'value based healthcare', 'prevention', and 'innovation and scale up', with a fourth 'digital' academy in development
- Establishing new 'communities of practice' across our Regional Partnership Boards network

The Welsh Government has established an independent review of future solutions for electronic prescribing and the electronic transfer of prescriptions in Wales. Channel 3 Consulting are conducting this work, supported by an expert panel established to advise the Welsh Government on matters related to the review, assist the independent reviewers in its conduct, and provide assurance of the review's findings.

This independent review is surveying the whole lifecycle of prescription and medicine data in Wales across all health sectors, taking into account the needs of patients, clinicians and professionals as well as the wider system needs.

The work will be concluded by April and will provide the foundation for the Welsh Government's policy and strategy for delivering electronic prescribing and Digital Medicines Management activity across all Welsh health sectors.

The roll out of *Consultant Connect* has meant that GPs have a means of accessing secondary care advice and support, as well as holding virtual patient consultations throughout the pandemic. The service has received excellent feedback from GPs and paramedics.

This system reduces the need for secondary care referrals, to help manage waiting lists and ensure patients in need of more specialist advice can access it.

The Minister for Health and Social Services has increased funding for digital transformation by an extra £25m in 2021-22, and has added an extra £10m to the core funding allocated to the new Digital Health and Care Wales organisation which will be established in April. This extra funding next year is on top of more than £100m extra investment in digital since 2019.

Local Authority Hardship Fund and the formula relating to local authority lost savings as a result of the pandemic.

Both the £25m for savings not achieved and the £25m to support local authorities' investment in digital transformation are allocated on the same overall formula as the settlement. A formula approach was used as local authority decisions about both areas will have been taken at different points in time and to different levels of impact. The revenue support grant formula takes account of the characteristics of each authority.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd