



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P-VG-3173-19

Dr Dai Lloyd AM  
Chair  
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

20 September 2019

Dear Dai,

Thank you for your letter of 15 August requesting a formal response to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee report on community and district nursing services. The Committee's consideration of the oral and written evidence presented before them has produced a helpful report and recommendations.

Within your report you make 10 recommendations and I have set out my response to the report's individual recommendations below.

### **Recommendation 1.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must ensure that the crucial role of community nursing, including children's community nurses, in the future delivery of healthcare is properly recognised in its workforce planning, nurse recruitment and training.

### **Response: Accept**

There are national planning processes in place in Wales to ensure that services are responsive to people's needs and the way they live their lives.

Health boards and NHS trusts have a statutory duty, under the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014, to produce balanced Integrated Medium Term Plans (IMTPs).

IMTPs are shaped and supported by work undertaken by the Regional Partnership Boards, through the population needs assessments and the Areas Plans. Data analysis of performance and demand and capacity planning tools are regularly used by those in the NHS to plan and improve their services. The IMTP sets out how the organisations expect to meet the expected demand for treatment and care and this includes a workforce plan.

This year a new requirement for Primary Care Clusters to produce an IMTP has enhanced the planning process. Cluster IMTPs will be produced by end September 2019, in readiness to feed through into the health board/trust IMTP.

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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.

The Cluster Needs Assessment is the cornerstone of the cluster IMTP. This assessment will consider the demand within the cluster for community and home based care and what workforce is needed to meet this need.

IMTPs must bring together the planning, finance and workforce requirements in a coherent plan for the organisation over a three year period. The NHS Planning Framework 2020-2023, which will be issued in the autumn, sets the Welsh Government's directions for the service for the 7th round of IMTPs. The framework reinforces the Government's position to support the delivery of care at, or as close to home as possible, and to support the shift treatment and care from acute to community services, where appropriate.

It is well understood that the workforce needs to be appropriately recruited, trained, equipped and supported, as this is crucial to operating an effective health and social care service that A Healthier Wales calls for. Working alongside Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), on the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy, it will be important to ensure that we develop the qualified practitioners to deliver the care needed in the future. The consultation on the latest draft strategy closes on 18 September and work to develop the next steps will begin thereafter.

**Financial Implications** – Any increase in priority areas, in the absence of reductions in other areas will increase the overall funding requirements, this together with methods of funding will need to be taken into account at the point of policy decisions being taken.

## **Recommendation 2.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must undertake an audit of the number of children's nurses working in the community to inform its future workforce planning. This must take account of the specific needs of children with complex medical conditions to ensure sufficient supply of suitably skilled children's community nurses in the future.

## **Response: Accept**

Children's nurses work in a range of different health and care settings. HEIW is working to understand both the categories and numbers of staff that are supported through NHS Wales and their social care partners. Greater recognition is needed that successful integrated working needs mechanisms to better support and train staff, and the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy will seek to highlight this requirement.

The Cluster Needs Assessment will review the demand within the cluster for community and home based care, including the needs of children with complex medical needs, who will be best placed to meet these needs and are the cornerstone of the cluster IMTP.

Working with HEIW and the Knowledge and Analytical Services Welsh Government will investigate the possibility of undertaking an audit immediately and longer term will consider arrangements to routinely capture workforce data of children's nurses working in the community.

**Financial Implications** – Any increase in priority areas, in the absence of reductions in other areas will increase the overall funding requirements, this together with methods of funding will need to be taken into account at the point of policy decisions being taken.

### **Recommendation 3.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must publish an update on progress to develop an action plan to address shortages in community nursing for both children and young people and adults with palliative care needs.

#### **Response: Accept**

Significant work has already been undertaken to increase the nursing workforce in Wales, with positive results. However, we are not complacent and recognise there are challenges around the recruitment and retention of nurses in a number of settings and within the third sector that provide support in palliative care and end of life care.

The Welsh Government is committed to actively supporting health boards to meet the needs of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act and understand what sufficient staffing looks like and will continue to work with health boards & trusts across Wales on approving IMTPs recognising that our workforce underpins services. Section 25A of this Act sets out the NHS health boards and trusts duty to have regard to providing sufficient nurses to allow time to care for patients sensitively. It also clarifies that this applies both where nursing services are provided and where they are contracted or commissioned. This includes services commissioned to provide palliative care and end of life care.

We continue to increase the level of investment in the future workforce of NHS Wales, with £114m invested in 2019-20, an increase of £7m available in 2018-19. As a result of this additional investment, nurse training places have risen by 68% since 2014. We have also retained the NHS bursary for eligible nurse, midwives and allied health professionals.

In 2014-15, we were commissioning 24 district nurses training places, this increased to 41 places in 2015-16 and increased again to 80 places in 2017-18 and 80 places in 2018-19; this is over a tripling of our commissioned places. Further to this additional resource through the Plaid Cymru budget compact of £1.4m for each financial year 18/19 and 19/20 has been set aside to support the release of community nurses by health boards to train as district nurses and to maximise the opportunity the additional commissioned places has provided.

In 2017, our national and international campaign “This is Wales: train, work, live”, extended to nursing, supporting health boards and trusts to recruit nurses from overseas as well as from across the UK.

The End of Life Care Board is continuing to develop actions to address shortages in community nursing for both children and young people.

**Financial Implications** – None

### **Recommendation 4.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must produce and publish a strategy for extending the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 to all settings, including community and district nursing services.

#### **Response: Reject**

It is important to remember that the Act already applies to all settings where nursing care is provided or commissioned in Wales. Section 25A sets out the overarching responsibility for health boards to ensure there are sufficient nurses to care for patients sensitively in both

provided and commissioned services, and health boards are committed to meeting this duty.

Regarding the extension of sections 25B, C and E of the Act to “all settings”, it would not be possible at this time to articulate a strategic vision with any detail that would be considered valuable or worthwhile. There are significant and numerous fundamental differences to the various settings in which nurses provide care in Wales. For example, the degree to which multi-disciplinary working impacts on the workloads of nurses varies dramatically, and this in turn will lead to variability in the design of the requisite evidence-based workforce planning tools and the time required for their development. It is far too early to begin to understand the level of complexity around that variability across all settings, a substantial piece of mapping work will need to be undertaken by the All Wales Nurse Staffing Programme before a national strategy could be contemplated. The Programme Manager has begun the early stages of that work.

The All Wales Nurse Staffing Programme hosts four distinct work-streams preparing the way and developing the necessary evidence-based workforce planning tools to extend sections 25 B and C of the Act into district nursing, adult mental health inpatients, health visiting and paediatrics inpatients. There is a plan and structure in place for exploring the extension of the Act to these four existing settings, but we cannot confidently apply that same model to all settings as per the committee’s recommendation for the reasons mentioned above.

Significant progress has been made within the district nursing work stream in the last 18 months. The interim CNO staffing principles for district nursing were published in September 2017 and health boards will be undertaking their fourth returns against compliance with those principles in September. These data have given us an invaluable view of the landscape of the workforce in this setting, which will be vital in eventually calculating the impact the Act might have when extended to district nursing.

A draft Welsh Levels of Care tool for district nursing has been developed to the point where it is now undergoing the same iterative testing process that formed the basis of the Welsh Levels of Care tool being used in acute adult medical and surgical wards today.

To ensure a consistent approach to the work across all four work-streams, I recently agreed to £1.23m of funding over the next 4 years to support the All Wales Nurse Staffing Programme which includes a designated project lead for each setting.

**Financial Implications** – None.

#### **Recommendation 5.**

The Committee recommends that:

Subject to a successful evaluation, the Welsh Government must ensure a rapid and co-ordinated roll-out of the Neighbourhood District Nursing model across all community nursing teams in Wales.

#### **Response: Accept**

Subject to a successful evaluation the Welsh Government will consider the options for commencing the roll-out of the Neighbourhood District nursing model across Wales in 2020-21 as part of the forthcoming budget round. The investment requirements for the full roll-out will need to be considered in the context of the funding for Wales arising from the multi-year Comprehensive Spending Review by the UK Government, which is due to take place during 2020.

**Financial Implications** – Any increase in priority areas, in the absence of reductions in other areas will increase the overall funding requirements, this together with methods of funding will need to be taken into account at the point of policy decisions being taken.

**Recommendation 6.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must ensure that there is an accurate and detailed picture of the current community nursing workforce across Wales. This must include detailed information about patient numbers and needs to inform strategic workforce and service planning.

**Response: Accept**

Significant work has already been undertaken to resolve staffing data quality issues in district and community nursing. This is reflected in the latest Welsh Government statistical release for the NHS workforce, published on 27 March 2019

Further work is underway with HEIW to address any residual workforce data quality issues.

Primary Care Cluster planning, the health board/trust IMTP process and the population needs assessments undertaken by RPBs, all help to ensure the staffing complement is identified and can be used to plan and transform services.

**Financial Implications** – None

**Recommendation 7.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must work with HEIW and health boards to enable existing nursing staff to access further training opportunities, including the district nursing specialist qualification.

**Response: Accept**

In 2014-15 we commissioned 24 district nurses training places, this increased to 41 places in 2015-16 and 2016-17, and increased again to 80 places in 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20; this is over a tripling of our annual commissioned places over the last five years. Further to this additional resource through the Plaid Cymru budget compact of £1.4m for each financial year 18/19 and 19/20 has been set aside to support the release of community nurses by health boards to train as district nurses and to maximise the opportunity the additional commissioned places has provided.

HEIW is currently leading on the delivery of the Plaid Cymru budget compact funded education places to provide additional District Nurses, whilst the figures are currently showing that the number of district nurses being released to complete their training is proving challenging to achieve, we do believe that there are more staff than ever before undertaking this training.

At the end of the pilot a full evaluation will be commissioned to assess the impact of having facilitated support to train as a district nurse has had on the system.

**Financial Implications** – None

**Recommendation 8.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government, working with HEIW and health boards, must take steps to ensure that community nursing is promoted as an attractive career, including by ensuring greater exposure to community nursing placements during nurse training.

**Response: Accept**

Our national and international marketing campaign “This is Wales: train, work, live”, nursing campaign has community nursing as one of its main focus, with dedicated split creatives and case studies.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council is introducing the Future Nurse: Standards of proficiency for registered nurses (NMC 2018), which reflects what is expected of a 21st Century registered nurse, taking account of an increasing focus on public health, supporting health and lifestyle choices and readiness to deliver future care at home or closer to home settings. All Welsh Higher Education Institutions will be implementing the Future Nurse Standards from September 2020 and clinical placements including community will be assessed through the all Wales Practice Assessment Document.

**Financial Implications** – None

**Recommendation 9.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must work with Health Boards to ensure proper investment in appropriate technology for community nursing. The use of hand-held mobile devices with instant access to patient information, appointments and e-mails should be standard across Wales.

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government is working with all health boards on supporting investment in modern devices, which includes prioritisation of mobile devices for community nurses and others who are not based in hospitals. Recent example of this is the National Mobilisation Programme and investment in ABM UHB in 2017 that equipped thousands of staff with mobile access. Evidence from this project shows a significant benefit in the time available for supporting patients.

The Welsh Government is supporting health boards to make progress as quickly as possible, subject to the resources available locally and nationally. A Healthier Wales includes a commitment to significantly increase investment in digital as a key enabler of change and this is supported by an increasing emphasis on common national standards across digital devices and applications in Wales.

**Financial Implications** – No new financial implications have been identified.

**Recommendation 10.**

The Committee recommends that:

The evaluation of the Neighbourhood District Nursing pilots must include an assessment of the impact on patients and staff of the scheduling software being trialled in Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. Subject to a positive outcome, the Welsh Government must require and fund health boards to provide scheduling software to community nursing teams across Wales.

**Response: Accept**

The Neighbourhood District Nursing Pilots in Powys teaching Health Board and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board are looking to replicate and test the benefits of scheduling software within their second year pilot and to understand more greatly the benefits and roll out of such a system. Subject to a successful evaluation the Welsh Government will consider the options for commencing the roll-out of the scheduling software across Wales in 2020-21 as part of the forthcoming budget round. The investment requirements for the full roll-out will need to be considered in the context of the funding for Wales arising from the multi-year Comprehensive Spending Review by the UK Government, which is due to take place during 2020.

**Financial Implications** – Any increase in priority areas, in the absence of reductions in other areas will increase the overall funding requirements, this together with methods of funding will need to be taken into account at the point of policy decisions being taken.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

**Vaughan Gething AC/AM**

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