# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Access to General Medical Services - Publication of research into accessing primary care services delivered in a general practice setting** |
| **DATE** | **31 July 2019** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Improving access to health and wellbeing services is a key priority for this Government with a commitment made in *Taking Wales Forward* to improve access to GP surgeries. Significant emphasis has been placed on this throughout the General Medical Services (GMS) contract reform programme with the new GMS Contract for 2019-20 clearly highlighting access as a significant area.

The National Survey results of 2018-19 showed an increase in satisfaction with GP services but there continues to be a high proportion of people finding it difficult to make an appointment (40%) although there has been some improvement in this area when compared with 2017-18.

In order to better understand the needs of the people in Wales and to understand what lies behind the statistics, I commissioned research, back in autumn 2018, to explore the perceptions and experiences of accessing services, the barriers people face when accessing care at their GP practice and to understand what “good access” would look like to the people of Wales.

The report, published this week, clearly shows that people across the country would like to see improvements in how they access services at their GP practice and highlights the importance of driving change through our Primary Care contracts. The full report can be found at <https://gov.wales/accessing-primary-care-services-qualitative-research>.

The findings of this research have been a key consideration when developing the Access to In-Hours GMS Services standards, I announced back in March, which are a mechanism to drive improvement and provide clarity around what is expected; for professionals and patients alike. There is a clear connection between the recommendations of the report and the improvements we seek to see through achievement of the access standards. This, coupled with significant investment of around £13 million through the new GMS Contract 2019-20 specifically relating to access will help deliver the improvement people want to see, making it easier for people to get the care they need.

That said, I recognise that this journey of improvement will be continuous and there are areas of the report that require further consideration including looking at the excellent examples of good practice that already exist across Wales. I will continue to work with my officials, professionals and our wider stakeholders to see the changes put in place and to think ahead to future developments that are needed to ensure the best level of service for our citizens.

*This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep Members informed. Should Members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.*