

Health Secretary welcomes review findings into Sexual Health Services in Wales

The review was undertaken by Public Health Wales following consultations with a wide-range of stakeholders and overseen by the Sexual Health Programme Board.

The report acknowledges the significant contribution sexual health services in Wales make in the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and in providing contraception.

The report does however highlight inconsistencies in sexual health service provision across Wales, including services provided by primary care, and accessibility to, and availability of, abortion services.

It also found that attendances at sexual health clinics have doubled in the last five years, which is putting pressure on existing service models.

Welcoming the report, the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“My vision for sexual health services in Wales is one of modern services meeting the needs of all users. I am pleased to see the report praises the commitment of the sexual health workforce in Wales and the progress that has been made.

“We’ve made tremendous strides in recent years in reducing teenage pregnancies, but the burden of sexually transmitted infections remains considerable and it’s clear from this report that more needs to be done, particularly in respect of access and inequality.

The report’s recommendations include:

- Health boards to develop an understanding of the needs of their population and have a system in place to deliver services to vulnerable groups
- Considering amending the legal framework to allow patients to take medication for termination of pregnancy at home
- Enhancing the role of for primary care and pharmacies in sexual health provision, for example delivering over the counter oral contraception
- Health boards look at other opportunities to extend provision of Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) in both primary and secondary care.

The Health Secretary added:

"We wanted an honest picture of services and now we have one to inform improvements. We will work with stakeholders to develop an implementation plan, and the Sexual Health Programme Board will remain in place to support and oversee the implementation of the recommendations over a two-year period.

"I'd like to thank the Public Health Wales reviewers for the collaborative way in which they undertook the review, and to all those who contributed to it."

Dr Giri Shankar, Professional Lead Consultant for Health Protection at Public Health Wales, who oversaw the review on behalf of the organisation, said:

"While huge progress has been made in addressing teenage pregnancies, much work remains to be done on accessibility to services, risky behaviours, modernising information gathering systems, access to abortion services and moving care closer to patients.

"We are confident that the implementation plan coming out of the review will provide a great opportunity to make further progress in these key areas of need, particularly by harnessing recent advances in technology.

"We are grateful to Welsh Government for asking us to undertake this much-needed review of sexual health services in Wales. It was a collaboration between all partners involved in sexual health provision and has yielded rich information on the state of services in Wales.

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