

Less reliance on hospitals & more care closer to home – Health Secretary outlines revolution in Wales' health & social care

The proposals are set out in the Welsh Government's long-term plan for the future of health and social care in Wales, A Healthier Wales, which focuses on providing more joined-up services, in community settings – removing many of the current frustrations expressed by those both using and working within the system.

In the future people will only go to a general hospital when it is essential. The intention is to create even better care locally, with support and treatment available across a range of community-based services. This shift will mean that when hospital based care is needed it can be accessed more quickly,

The changes will begin immediately, with a £100million Transformation Fund to support the implementation of the plan. The funding will be targeted at resources to speed up the process, including the development of new integrated prevention services and activities in the community.

Vaughan Gething said:

“This year we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the NHS, which was born here in Wales. We remain hugely proud of its achievements and all who work within it. However, it is clear that much has changed in those 70 years. With an increase in life expectancy and our continued public health challenges the service is facing increasing pressure.

“Today's plan sets out our vision for the future – it looks at how we will adapt to meet these future challenges and transform the way we deliver health and social care. We will deliver that change and remain true to the core values of the NHS to provide free healthcare for all.”

This is the first time Welsh Government has set out a shared plan for health and social care. The aim is to see a shift from healthcare which focuses on treating people when they become unwell, to one that provides services which support people to stay well, lead healthier lifestyles and live independently for as long as possible.

There will also be more focus on seamless services, which are designed to fit around the individual. Information will be shared between services and providers, allowing a smoother patient experience. This will also allow those

with the greatest need to be treated first and make the most effective use of resources.

The plan also commits the Welsh Government to increasing investment in digital technologies and to support and develop the workforce, including unpaid carers and volunteers.

The Health Secretary added:

“The Parliamentary Review found that much of what we are doing in health and social care in Wales is right, but that change needs to be made to secure services for the future and to ensure people continue to get the best care.

“Today we are responding to that review. This will be a revolution from within the health service. We have to move on from the idea that the hospital is the first or best place for you to be when you are unwell. That isn’t always the case, especially when there are a range of local services that will allow you to remain safely at home.

“I recognise the challenge and this will take time, but change will begin immediately. By the time we celebrate the 80th anniversary of our NHS I expect to see a stronger, joined-up system between health and social care that will be fit to serve people for generations to come.”

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, said:

“To respond effectively to our ageing population, we must re-evaluate the way we view social care. This is the first time Welsh Government has produced a joint plan for health and social services. It recognises the extremely important role social services play in promoting good health, keeping people independent for longer and reducing admissions to hospital. It makes sense to view it in partnership with health services, with all parts of the system working together to deliver better outcomes for all.”