

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Public Accounts Committee – Hospital Catering and Patient Nutrition

The Welsh Government welcomes the publication of the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations following its review of Hospital Catering and Patient Nutrition on 17 October 2016. Please find below a response to each of the ten recommendations:

Recommendation 1 We recommend that the Welsh Government put formal mechanisms in place to ensure the work of the All-Wales Menu Framework Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Group is maintained and monitored and that patient feedback on meals is considered as part of every evaluation.

Response: Accept

- The All-Wales Menu Framework Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Group will continue to meet. Each year there will be one joint meeting between the All-Wales Menu Framework Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Group and the All-Wales Nutrition and Catering Group to ensure cross reference between the work on menus and nutrition and catering. Patient feedback on meals will be a standing item on the agenda.

Recommendation 2 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government makes public the results of future all Wales patient surveys in a timely fashion.

Response: Accept

- While there has been no Welsh Government requirement to undertake an all Wales patient survey on menus and hospital food to date as Health boards have themselves for a considerable time undertaken a form of patient satisfaction survey on food and catering services. The development of an all Wales survey was a response by the all Wales group to standardise the information collected across each individual health board and is health board led. As a result the outcomes are more meaningful to each individual health board to identify areas of good practice and areas of concern. The Welsh Government commits that these locally produced reports will be made public.
- On an all Wales basis the results have and will continue to be collated to identify general trends across time and health boards have shared the findings with Welsh Government. It is not sensitive enough to identify particular issues that may need addressing, as this will need to happen at individual health board level and does not provide on its own a full picture. In addition health boards undertake other methods of collecting important information and feedback on meal services and food satisfaction by undertaking ward based audits, focus groups and included in patient stories, to add to the overall survey, to provide a fuller picture. Welsh Government will expect individual health boards to make public any information concerning satisfaction with food and catering services.

Recommendation 3 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develops a suite of questions to be included within both the standardised nursing documentation and in future all Wales patient surveys to monitor whether health boards are recording and meeting the cultural, religious and dietary needs of patients.

Response: Accept

- The current nursing documentation includes assessment questions identifying dietary needs and specifying specific factors including religious and cultural influences. Future documentation will continue to reflect these issues.
- The current patient satisfaction survey asks patients on admission to a hospital ward if they are asked about dietary preferences or requirements. Consideration will be given to the types of questions that will be included in specific surveys on cultural and religious factors influencing dietary choices.

Recommendation 4 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government provide an update on the key stages for standardising the documentation identified in the Nurse Informaticist work plan and report to the Committee any slippages in the proposed timescale.

Response: Accept

- The NHS Executive Board was given an update on the nurse documentation project in March 2017.
- A stakeholder event is being held on 19 May 2017 with representatives from all health boards and trusts in Wales.
- A further update will be provided to the NHS Executive Board in June 2017.
- The Public Accounts Committee will receive an update on the documentation project in September 2017.

Recommendation 5 The Committee recommends that a review of workforce planning arrangements within the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) is undertaken to ensure that future vacancies or gaps in resources do not cause significant delays to key work streams and specifically to prevent a recurrence of the problems that have been experienced in relation to development and roll out of standardised nursing documentation.

Response: Accept

- NWIS and the University of Wales Trinity St David's has created the Wales Institute of Digital Information (WIDI) to offer a pipeline of students into NWIS and supporting existing staff. There has also been an increase in apprentice programmes.
- A nurse informaticist has been appointed to lead the work on the development of electric documentation. NWIS has confirmed that funding has been secured for this project and will appoint the appropriate resources to support this project. Once the project is fully staffed this should ensure no further delays to key work streams

Recommendation 6 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government carry out an assessment, as a matter of urgency, to categorise and prioritise areas of training that should be compulsory or alternatively determine whether there should be flexibility within health boards to prioritise the training needs of their staff.

Response: Accept

- Welsh Government will undertake work with health boards to examine compulsory training for nutrition.
- Health Boards carry the responsibility for prioritising areas of training for their own staff. Local needs analysis is the most effective method for identifying local education requirements.

Recommendation 7 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with health boards to develop and put in place the most effective methods for delivering training including consideration of e-learning and group training.

Response: Accept

- A range of learning materials already exists for nutrition training. Welsh Government is leading a review of the content of e-learning materials on nutrition (both food and fluid) through the all Wales nutrition and catering forum. This will be completed as part of their 2017-2018 work plan.
- Welsh Government will work with health boards to ensure the use of the most effective blend of e-learning and face to face learning.

Recommendation 8 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government issue a direction to health boards that a named non-executive director must have responsibility for hospital catering and patient nutrition.

Response: Accept

- This directive has been issued and the responses have been received from health organisations.
- All health boards and Trust have identified a non executive director lead linked to an executive officer.

Recommendation 9 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government gives utmost priority to making a decision on whether or not to procure an all Wales computerised information system. We expect to receive an update on the decision and a timetable for implementation by September 2017. If a decision is taken not to procure such a system, the Welsh Government needs to give clear guidance to NHS bodies on what they need to do individually to strengthen the IT systems supporting hospital catering and patient nutrition.

Response: Accept

- A business plan for a computerised information system is currently being reviewed and redrafted through liaison between staff in the Welsh Government Digital Health Team and NHS Wales health boards.
- The redrafted business case will be submitted to the NWIS Informatics Board when this is completed. The Board's decision will be based on the benefits and outcomes identified in the business case.
- The Committee will be given an update on the decision regarding an all Wales computerised catering information system by September 2017.

Recommendation 10 The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government revise the target for reducing food waste to challenge the health boards to minimise waste and maximise savings.

Response: Accept

- The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport has agreed a new hospital food waste of 5%. A Welsh Health Circular is being prepared and will be issued to health boards and Velindre NHS Trust in May.