# WRITTEN STATEMENT

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# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Update on Women’s Health** |
| **DATE** | **08 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

On International Women’s Day, I am pleased to provide an update about the progress being made to improve women’s and girls’ healthcare in Wales.

I have been clear in my commitment to improve health services and outcomes for women and girls and to address the inequalities that exist in our healthcare system.

I have set out strategic actions, including setting expectations for NHS services through the Quality Statement for Women’s and Girls’ Health. I have set up the National Clinical Strategic Network for Women’s Health, which will be led by two key roles – the clinical lead and strategic network manager. And the Welsh NHS is developing a Women’s Health Plan.

Several of those key actions have already been delivered. We have:

* Issued the Quality Statement for Women’s and Girls’ Health. The expectations it sets out are guiding the delivery of women’s health services across Wales.
* Published the Discovery Report: Foundations for a Women’s Health Plan. The recommendations, including putting in place the infrastructure to monitor progress and outcomes against the Women’s Health Quality Statement, are providing the basis for the work to produce the Women’s Health Plan.
* Introduced specialist endometriosis nurses in each health board. They are making a real difference for women in their local areas, raising awareness and providing women with a direct contact they can speak to about their condition. Feedback suggests women feel supported, listened to, and have a better understanding of their condition.
* Funded pelvic health co-ordinators in each health board. They spend time with patients in clinics and liaise with multidisciplinary teams to improve service provision across Wales. This is key to tackling continence issues specific to women, particularly during pregnancy and following birth. An all-Wales Continence Task and Finish Group is being set up to further identify ways of raising awareness and reducing stigma around this important issue.

Today I am pleased to welcome the appointment of Dr Helen Munro, a consultant in sexual and reproductive healthcare as the first clinical lead for women’s health, and Alex Hicks as the strategic network manager, who will take forward the Women’s Health Plan, beginning with the short-term actions set out in the discovery report.

I have previously committed to the plan being built on the voices of women and girls, and while this approach takes time, I expect consultation to take place on these immediate actions over the summer, with a view to publishing the plan by end of 2024.

I am also setting out my approach to increasing funding for research for women’s health. While the current financial climate makes this difficult, I have instructed my officials to prioritise moving resources towards women’s health over the next couple of years. I have agreed the following:

* **Women’s health research prioritisation exercise** to start in April 2024. The process seeks the views of those with lived experience and health and social care professionals on the issues that matter most to them.
* **A commissioned call for research focused entirely on women’s health priorities** to be launched in April 2025, building on the research prioritisation exercise, committing £750,000 to women’s health projects.
* **Encouraging a bid from Welsh universities for catalytic funding to create a Women’s Health Research Centre.**

In the meantime, the expectations set out in the quality statement continue to guide service delivery and progress is being made across Wales. A Women’s Health Hub has been established at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, in Llantristant, for example, which bring together all gynaecology services in one place.