

Health and Social Care Guide for Wales



Improving Health in Wales

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government





Introduction

At some time, we will all need to use health and social care services. This guide sets out what you can expect from those services now, and in the future as we make improvements. It also tells you how you can get more information about these services.

For many people, ill health will be short-term and a return to a normal life will be possible without the need for social care. For others, the effects will be farreaching, and they and their carers may need longer-term support. By working together, health and social care agencies can make it easier for people to live independently supported by family and carers.

'Improving Health in Wales', published in January 2001, sets out the plans for healthcare services over the next 10 years. 'Building for the Future', published in March 1999, sets out the direction for social care in Wales.

These documents describe what improvements we will make to make sure that services can meet the needs of patients, users and carers. They also show how these improvements can best be achieved by health and social care agencies working together to plan and deliver services.



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1 Our commitment to you

You can expect your care and treatment to be based on the following principles.

- Health and social services will work together to plan and deliver services to meet your needs.
- We will treat you politely and with honesty and respect.
- We will treat you fairly based on your need.
- We will involve you in decisions about your care and treatment, and give you information to make informed choices.
- We will, with your permission, keep a relative or friend you name informed about your condition.
- We will respect your rights to privacy and confidentiality and keep your health and social care records secure. You can apply for access to see your records.
- We will give you a choice as to whether or not to take part in medical research or student training.

- We will give you information in an appropriate format or language to suit your needs.
- We will give you extra help if you need it, for example having someone to speak for you when necessary.

2 What you can do to help

NHS and social services will work better if you use them wisely.

- Do what you can to stay healthy and try to avoid things that damage your health.
- Care for yourself when you have a minor illness by treating coughs and colds yourself.
- Listen carefully to advice about your treatment or medicine. Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines.
- Be on time for your appointment, or let your clinic, practice or hospital know if you cannot make it. It may be possible to book someone else in your place.
- Make sure that your doctor, dentist, hospital or clinic have



up-to-date information about how to contact you.

- Your co-operation is important in helping to free up a hospital bed as soon as you no longer need it. This will help make sure we have beds available for others who need to be cared for in hospital.
- If you are receiving care at home, tell one of the main people involved in your care (for example, a social worker, district nurse or GP) about changes in your circumstances which may affect your care.
- Give blood if you can, and consider carrying an organdonor card.
- Return any equipment such as wheelchairs, crutches, toilet aids, bath aids, hoists and walking frames if you don't need them any more.
- Treat NHS and social care staff, other patients, carers and visitors with respect. Violence or racial, sexual or verbal abuse is not acceptable.

3 How to get information and advice

NHS Direct Wales

NHS Direct Wales is a confidential 24-hour bilingual phone helpline, staffed by nurses and information advisers who can give you advice about your health.

You can call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47** (calls are charged at local rates).

An **interpreter service** is available in languages other than English and Welsh.

If you have a **textphone**, you can contact NHS Direct Wales on **0845 606 46 47**.

A specially-trained nurse or information adviser can give you advice (24 hours a day, seven days a week) about what to do if you are ill, or have health concerns about someone close to you. They can also help if you need information about local health services or any other useful contacts.

Online access to health information

There are a number of internet sites that can give you information about health services and a range of conditions and treatment options. They can also give you information on self-help groups and voluntary organisations. You will also find information on how you can access health and social care organisations on the NHS Direct Wales website.

Visit:

7pm to 11pm. And, on Saturdays and Sundays the line is open from 12 noon until 12 midnight.

Phone: 0800 132 737.

A freephone stress
 helpline for people in rural
 communities who are worried
 or anxious. The line is open
 Monday to Friday 10am to
 2pm and 7pm to 11pm and
 Saturday and Sunday 12 noon
 until 12 midnight.

Phone: 0800 0858 119.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

www.welsh-blood.org.uk

www.hpw.wales.gov.uk

www.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales website

NHS Direct Online

Welsh Blood Service

Health Promotion

3

Health of Wales Information Service

Useful helplines

Two new freephone services are available for people in Wales.

 A freephone mentalhealth helpline CALL (Community Advice and Listening Line) is open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and Benefit enquiries – Your local Benefits Agency office will give you information and advice about social security benefits and claims. You can find the address and phone number of your nearest Benefits Agency office in the phone book.



You can make an appointment to see someone at your local benefit office.

They are normally open between 8.30am and 4pm.

Leaflet MG1, available at your local benefit office, is a useful guide to benefit entitlements. You will find details of national benefit helplines in this leaflet.

Some **useful helplines** are shown below.

 Benefit enquiry line is a freephone number to provide advice and information for people with disabilities, and their carers, about benefits and allowances.

Phone: 0800 8822 00 and textphone: 0800 2433 55

- Disability Living Allowance for advice on existing claims.
 Phone: 0845 71234 56
- Winter Fuel Payments
 helpline for information about
 winter fuel payments open
 8.30am to 4.30pm during
 winter. Phone: 08459 1515 15
 and textphone: 01325 745
 136

 Winter Warmth advice line for information about how to make your home warmer.
 Phone: 0800 0857 000 and textphone: 0800 2244 88

Social services and social care – You can get information about social services provided by your local authority in many public places such as GP practices, post offices and libraries. The number of your local social services is in the phone book under the name of your local council or local authority.

Local authority – For advice on education, leisure and housing services, contact your local authority. The number is in the phone book.

Community health councils in Wales – These councils provide free independent advice and support to users of healthcare services. The number of your local community health council is in your local phone book, or you may contact the Association of Welsh Community Health Councils on 029 2023 5558.

Website: www.patienthelp.wales.nhs.uk

Local information – Health and social care agencies have local directories which provide information about services.

4 What to do if you need to see someone or make an appointment

You and your GP practice

When you first register with a GP, you should ask for a copy of their practice leaflet which will tell you:

- when the surgery is open;
- how to make an appointment;
- arrangements for getting advice over the phone;
- arrangements for home visits;
- how to contact your GP outside normal surgery hours; and
- how to order repeat prescriptions.

About your appointment

- If you need to make an appointment, you should contact your GP or practice nurse.
- Your GP or practice nurse will listen to your concerns, and discuss your condition,

- treatment, options and the likely outcome.
- If your GP needs to refer you to hospital, you will be told why you are being referred and what will happen when you go to hospital.
- In some instances you and your doctor will agree that a second opinion would be a good idea.
 If this is the case, your doctor will arrange this.

Urgent appointments

Your GP provides an emergency service outside normal opening hours (the phone number is in your practice leaflet). Your GP will make sure that you have access to appropriate general medical care 24 hours a day, and tell you how to get medicines urgently when pharmacies are closed.

NHS Direct Wales

If you are not sure whether to treat yourself at home or whether you need to see a doctor, you can contact NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 and speak to a specially-trained nurse who can give advice.



You may contact NHS Direct Wales if you have any questions about how to register with a GP or any other questions about GP services.

Improvements to expect in the future

- You will be able to see a GP or health professional (such as a practice nurse) within 24 hours of contacting the practice and much sooner in an emergency.
- To help you to choose which GP to register with, we will publish more information about each GP practice.

You and your dentist If you are registered with an NHS dentist, you:

- can ask for information about the range, quality and cost of treatment and care available on the NHS;
- can ask for a dental treatment plan, setting out what is needed and the estimated costs before the start of your treatment;
- may be entitled to free replacement or repair where a filling or crown needs to be

redone within one year of being provided;

- will not have to pay for a dental examination if you are under 25 or aged 60 or over;
- can receive advice over the phone, and treatment if an emergency arises when the surgery is closed; and
- will need to visit your dentist at least once every 15 months to stay registered.

If you are not registered with an NHS dentist, you can contact NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 for:

- information on how to contact an NHS dentist, or look up the NHS Direct Wales website www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk; and
- advice on local arrangements for emergency dental treatment.

New measures are in place to attract more dentists into parts of Wales where they are most needed.

You and your optometrist (optician)

If you go to an optician, you can:

- ask for a leaflet that explains whether you are entitled to a free NHS sight test and whether you are entitled to an NHS optical voucher to put towards the cost of your glasses;
- have a test which includes checking your sight and for any disease or abnormality; and
- expect to be given, immediately after your sight test, a statement to say that you do not need glasses or a prescription for glasses.

You can take the prescription to any optometrist (optician) of your choice.

We are introducing new measures to provide extra services to identify eye disease in the early stages in those groups of people most at risk, and better services for people who have low vision.

You and your pharmacist

If your GP gives you a prescription, you may take it to any pharmacy you choose. You

will have to pay a charge, unless you are eligible for free or reduced-cost prescriptions. Your pharmacist may ask for proof. If you are not eligible for free prescriptions, but need medicine regularly, it may be more economical for you to buy a prepayment certificate. You can get details from your local pharmacy or post office.

- In most cases you will be given your medicine straightaway. If it is not available, you will be given a time when you can collect it. This is often on the same day or the following day.
- You will also receive advice about your medicine and how to deal with a range of minor illnesses (such as coughs or colds). You may ask your pharmacist for advice, even if you don't want to buy anything.
- Prescriptions are free for people under 25 and 60 or over.

To find out when a pharmacy is open in the evening or weekend, call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47.



In future, new arrangements will be in place, aimed at making it easier for you to receive your medicines. For example:

- people with chronic conditions will be able to pick up repeat prescriptions from their pharmacist without having to go back to the GP practice or health centre each time; and
- some pharmacists will be able to deliver your medicines. Ask your local pharmacy for details.

You and social services

Your local authority has a responsibility to provide or arrange social services. They include the following.

- Services to help children in need and their families. These include:
 - services to support disabled children and other children in need, including family support such as short breaks and respite care (care provided to allow the carer to also take a break);

- services for children who are looked after by the local authority, including fostering and residential care;
- · adoption services; and
- services to protect children who are at risk.
- Services to support elderly people and people with physical, mental and learning disabilities to manage at home and in the community. These include:
 - personal care services if you need help with getting in and out of bed, dressing, and washing yourself;
 - meals services if you cannot prepare meals yourself;
 - rehabilitation or intermediate care services – these are services to help people who have left hospital to make as full a recovery as possible, and will be arranged alongside the NHS;
 - occupational therapy services
 to provide advice about
 equipment and adaptations
 to your home (equipment

- may be provided depending on your need);
- advice, information and support – so you can choose a suitable service such as occupational therapy during the day, respite care, or going into a residential or nursing-care home; and
- services to support carers to help carers in the home and allow them to go out or take breaks.

5 What to expect if you need to go to hospital for treatment

Hospital services

- Your hospital will either write to you with an appointment date, time and directions to your clinic, or may ask you to phone to make an appointment at a suitable date.
- We will introduce new ways of booking your appointment.
 These will make it easier for you to make or change hospital appointments. It will take time to put these new arrangements into practice. They will be available for outpatients first.

- By 2003 we aim to make sure that most outpatients have a choice of appointments. We will continue to make sure that people also have a choice of inpatient and day-case appointment times.
- A doctor, nurse or other health professional will explain what is wrong with you, the different treatments for your condition, and the risks and benefits of each treatment. They will discuss and listen to your views. If you decide to go ahead with your treatment, they may ask you to sign a consent form.
- The hospital will make sure all toilets, bathrooms, waiting rooms, wards and treatment rooms are kept clean.
- In most cases you should be cared for in single-sex accommodation. Single-sex bathroom and toilet facilities will be available in all cases.
 We are working with the NHS to set a firm target to get rid of mixed-sex accommodation in Wales.
- The hospital will assess your dietary needs, taking account



of your medical, religious or cultural needs.

- You will receive a choice of good food, and any help that you need to eat or order your meals.
- Food will be available on a flexible basis in case you have missed meals, for example, due to treatment or late admission.

What to expect if your child has to go into hospital

- Younger children will normally be cared for in a children's ward unless there are special circumstances.
- Adolescents will be cared for in either a children's, adolescent or adult ward depending on their age, development, the facilities available and their personal choice.
- You should normally be able to stay with your child in hospital.
- Your child will normally be cared for by doctors, nurses and other health professionals who have been trained to work with children. When your child needs very specialised care, this may be provided by

professionals who work with others who are trained to work with children.

Hospital waiting times

The NHS is committed to reducing waiting times and giving people greater choice.

If you are referred to hospital as an outpatient

- The aim is to make sure that you are seen within 26 weeks.
 (Currently, more than seven out of every 10 patients are seen within this time.)
- As a first step, we are looking to achieve a maximum waiting time of 18 months for an outpatient appointment, as a way of making progress to achieving 26 weeks' maximum waiting time.

About your outpatient appointment

- You should be seen within 30 minutes of your appointment time.
- You will receive an explanation for any delays.

Urgent referral for cancer

If, following a referral from your GP for suspected cancer, the cancer specialist considers your case to be urgent, every hospital is now working to make sure that you will be seen within 10 working days.

If you have to go into hospital as an inpatient

- The aim is to make sure that you are admitted within 18 months.
- Over time the aim is to reduce this to below 18 months. For example:
 - if you need a cataract operation, you should not wait more than four months; or
 - if you need routine heart surgery, you should not wait more than 12 months.

Your operation

Your operation should not be cancelled after you are admitted to hospital, or on the day of surgery, for reasons which have nothing to do with your medical condition. If it is, you should have your operation within 28 days. If

this is not possible, the hospital will arrange for you to be told, within 28 days, of the new date for your operation.

Leaving hospital

In most cases arranging to leave hospital will be straightforward and you will be able to leave on the date that has been agreed with you. But for people who need ongoing care, you will have your needs assessed. If you are eligible, your GP, community nurse or social services department will meet these needs. We will do everything possible to work with you and your family to avoid delays when you leave hospital.

You can expect:

- planning and preparing for you to leave hospital to begin from the time you go into hospital;
- a discharge plan to be prepared for you which will take account of your needs and preferences (if you agree, your carer can be involved).
- a senior nurse to be responsible for co-ordinating your discharge plan;



- when you are ready to leave hospital, a doctor or nurse to talk to you about your recovery, and tell you who to contact in an emergency; and
- your GP to be told about you leaving within 24 hours of you actually leaving.

If you need help from social services

You can expect:

- to have an assessment of your need for care;
- to be given a written plan of your care (which has been agreed with you) including details of services that you will receive after leaving hospital, for example, GP, health visitor, community nurse, midwife or social services;
- your care plan to be delivered promptly;
- to have essential needs or support at home in place (such as medical equipment or minor adaptations) so that you will not be delayed when leaving hospital; and
- your care plan to be reviewed after you have left hospital, and

if necessary adjusted to take account of any change in your circumstances.

In 2001, we introduced a new, free home-care scheme for elderly people who need support when leaving hospital. In practice this means that vulnerable people who have been assessed as needing support when leaving hospital will receive up to six weeks' free home care according to eligibility and their needs.

6 What to do in an emergency

Hospital accident and emergency (A & E) department

If you go to your nearest accident and emergency department:

- a doctor or a nurse will see you within 10 minutes to judge how urgent your case is;
- the decision whether to admit you to hospital will be made after you have been given any tests and treatment you may need;
- you should not have to spend more than four hours in the A & E department (currently eight

- out of every 10 patients are seen within four hours); and
- if you have a heart attack, you should receive clot-busting treatment within 20 minutes of arriving at hospital.

Only use emergency services in a real emergency, as there will be seriously ill patients needing to use these services.

If you are not sure about whether you need to visit an accident and emergency department, you should speak to an NHS Direct Wales nurse on 0845 46 47.

Emergency ambulance

- If you call for an emergency ambulance, one should reach you within 18 minutes in most parts of Wales, or 21 minutes in more remote areas. 90% of ambulances achieve this target.
- In cases which are immediately life-threatening (for example, a suspected heart attack), the ambulance service aims to make sure that a paramedic or other suitably-trained person should reach you within eight

minutes to provide help. Currently, half of all patients receive help within this time. The aim is to improve this performance each year.

Emergency out-of-hours social services

The following emergency out-ofhours social services are available. These cover:

- protecting children and vulnerable adults;
- people who need an immediate assessment under the Mental Health Act 1983; and
- vulnerable or disabled children and adults if there is an emergency, such as a carer suddenly not being available.

The phone book contains a contact number for emergency social services, or you can get in touch with your local police, who will contact social services.

7 What to do if you need more help and support

Community care

Services which support people to live in their own homes are often



known as **community care** services.

If you think that you may be eligible for help, you can ask social services for an assessment of your needs. If you cannot get in touch yourself, someone else can do this for you. In most cases the advice or help is straightforward, and you will receive it straightaway. If you have more complicated needs, the assessment may include other services such as housing or health.

You can expect to:

- be involved in discussions about your needs, and have these assessed;
- be told the results of the assessment, know whether or not you are eligible to receive support, and be told how this support will be provided;
- be given a written plan of your care;
- have your care plan reviewed regularly, and adjusted to take account of any changes in your circumstances; and

 receive advice about support provided by local and national organisations.

Care homes (residential or nursing)

There may be times when a person finds it too difficult to cope at home, and may need to move into a care home.

Your local social services will:

- assess your needs;
- provide information about the range of local care homes, to help you decide which one will best suit you;
- make sure that you have a choice about which care home to move into, and help with arrangements; and
- explain how much you will have to pay for this.

Social care charges

Social services make a charge for most social care services which are assessed according to your level of income and savings. Before you receive any care, they will tell you how the charges are set and what you will have to pay.

They should give you a written copy of the information.

Community nursing services

If you need to see a nurse, midwife or health visitor, you can expect:

- an appointment to be agreed with you within two days; and
- a visit within an hour of the appointment time.

Occasionally, it may not be possible to keep the appointment because of an emergency. If this happens, you will be contacted quickly, to agree a new appointment.

You will receive free nursing care in your own home or in a care home, although you may have to contribute towards other aspects of care such as personal care, food and accommodation costs.

Services for carers

If you care for someone who needs support to live at home, you can ask social services for your own carer's assessment, even if the person you care for has refused a community care assessment. The assessment will be discussed with you and you will receive a copy.

You can expect to be offered support for your caring responsibilities. Social services will discuss the type of support you feel you need to make things easier for you. This could include having help with household tasks or support so you can take a break from your caring role. Social services will also be able to put you in touch with other support organisations.

For more information, ask your local social services department for the leaflet 'Carer's Assessment - Get the Facts'. Or, visit: www.wales.gov.uk/subisocial carers/

To find out how to get in touch with your local social services or housing department, contact your local authority or local council. The number is in your phone book.

Voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations provide a wide range of health and social care services to help people in hospital and in the community. These services include advocacy



(someone to speak for you if you need it), advice and information services, self-help groups, and specific services to do with:

- mental health;
- · learning disabilities;
- physical disabilities and a range of specific disabilities;
- sensory impairment;
- older people;
- carers;
- general health and health promotion;
- specific medical conditions;
- · HIV and Aids; and
- · alcohol and drug misuse.

If you would like information about voluntary organisations and their services, call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47.

8 What to do if you have a problem

If you have a problem, you should first discuss it with someone involved in your care such as a doctor, nurse, or social worker.

All hospitals, GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacists and social

services departments have a complaints procedure. You can contact the person who handles complaints, who will make sure your complaint is investigated. Your complaint will not put your care at risk.

We can learn valuable lessons from complaints, and use them to improve services to prevent the problem from happening again.

If you want to make a complaint

If you are not satisfied with your care or treatment, you can expect:

- your complaint to be thoroughly investigated and dealt with promptly; and
- to receive a full written reply from the organisation you complained about within agreed timescales. For complaints about the NHS and social services, you will receive a full written reply within four weeks. If there is a delay in completing the investigation, you will be kept informed of the progress.

Independent review

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you

can ask for an independent review. The procedure for this is slightly different for NHS and social services, but in both cases the person dealing with your complaint can give details about how to apply for an independent review.

Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the NHS complaints procedure, you can contact the Health Service Commissioner (Ombudsman). The phone number is 0845 601 0987 and the website address is www.ombudsman.org.uk

For complaints about social services, you can ask the Commission for Local Administration in Wales (Local Government Ombudsman) to investigate. Phone 01656 661325 or visit their website at www.ombudsmanwales.org

The Ombudsman will normally expect that you have tried to sort out your concerns through local NHS or social services procedures, before considering whether to take on your case.

Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW)

From April 2002 the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales became responsible for inspecting and regulating nursing and residential care homes. They will, in time, become responsible for examining care services provided by an agency in a person's home. The CSIW expects providers of social care to deal with complaints and concerns. If you are not satisfied or have serious concerns about the quality of care you, your child or a relative are receiving, you can ask the CSIW to investigate. Contact your nearest CSIW regional office. The number is in the phone book.

Community health councils (CHCs)

Community health councils are independent organisations which can help you with your complaint about the NHS. They can help you to take forward your complaint and advise and support you at meetings. The number of your local CHC is in the phone book. Or, you may contact the Association of Welsh Community



Health Councils on 029 2023 5558.

9 How you can stay healthy

10 tips to stay healthy

- Don't smoke. If you need help to stop smoking, ring the Smokers' Helpline 0800 1690 169 for information.
- Keep active. Make physical activity part of your everyday routine.
- Eat a balanced diet with lots of fruit, vegetables and wholegrain foods. Make sure your diet is low in sugar and fat.
- Ask for a flu jab if you are 65 or over to help you stay well in winter.
- Do not drink too much alcohol. Stick to sensible drinking levels.
- Have fun in the sun. But protect yourself and your family from sunburn.
- Practise safe sex. This can protect you from sexuallytransmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy. Ring the

Sexual Health helpline on 0845 6048 484.

- Use cancer screening services.
 They can detect problems at an early stage.
- Be safety aware at home, on the roads, at work and in your leisure time.
- Learn first aid. It can help save lives – find out about training courses in your area.

NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 can provide information on all these issues and a lot more.

10 What improvements to expect

You can expect the following improvements in future.

- Patients and the public will have greater involvement in helping to shape local health and social services.
- Health and social service organisations will publish an annual report to describe progress in meeting the standards in this guide.
- We will introduce a new NHS complaints procedure in 2003,

which will be easier to use and more independent of the NHS.

- All NHS organisations will have to ask patients for their views on services that they have received. They will publish the results and action taken to achieve improvements every year. This will include new priorities for the following year.
- A patient support service will be available in hospitals to help you sort out problems or concerns straightaway.
- From 2004 you will have the right to receive copies of letters between doctors involved in your care.
- We are planning a guide for children and young people.
 Children and young people will take part in developing the guide, so that it truly reflects issues which are important to them. The guide will be available at the end of 2003.
- From April 2003 your local authority will provide an information service on childcare providers in your area.

 New national standards of care have been set out for coronary heart disease, and are being developed for mental-health, cancer, diabetes, children, renal (kidney) services and services for older people.

If you want to comment on this guide

As part of our commitment to improve health and social care services, we will keep reviewing this guide.

If you have any suggestions or comments about this guide, please write to the address on the next page.

How to get further copies

We have published this booklet in the following languages.

English, Welsh, Arabic, Somali, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Hindi and Cantonese.

You may also call to order this guide on audiotape or in Braille.



You can get copies from:

Performance Quality and Regulation NHS Wales Department Welsh Assembly Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ.

Phone: 029 2082 3825

www.wales.nhs.uk/hscguide

