



UNISON Cymru/Wales

Health Manifesto 2016

For the health services we need

Our health services are the bedrock of our communities, helping the sick, weak and vulnerable and providing care and support whenever it is needed. The Welsh Assembly Elections are on 5 May 2016.

Use your vote to defend your public services.

The strain placed upon our hospitals, clinics and surgeries and you as health care employees, regularly features on the news. As front line public service workers you know how crucial sustained investment and good management are; why shouldn't we demand a world class NHS that Wales can be proud of?

This easy-to-read guide shows what UNISON Cymru/Wales is campaigning for at the Welsh Elections. You can do your bit too; read it and tell your friends and colleagues to read it too. Together, let's challenge the candidates in every Assembly seat to invest in the quality health services we need.

We oppose privatisation, marketisation and fragmentation of our health services in any form and we welcome the Welsh Government's commitment here. Ongoing state investment is vital.

AN ETHICAL CARE CHARTER FOR THE NHS

Welsh government should enforce an Ethical Care Charter across the NHS and care sectors which places the needs of care users, dignity of patients and investment in the care workforce above profit-making considerations. This wouldn't "short-change" clients and would allow for the recruitment and retention of a more stable workforce through good working conditions, sustainable pay and high training levels.

INTEGRATION OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Allowing the private sector a greater role in social care has not increased the quality and choice for all patients. It has created an unregulated sector where there is little incentive for employers to invest in training. UNISON believes the integration of health and social care would benefit everyone. We want to be fully involved in discussions for the future of the care sector and ending the two-tier workforce and raising the generally inferior social care employment conditions should be a priority. Care workers, including those whose work is informal, must be provided with professional support. Additionally, we seek formal registration of care workers paid for by the Welsh Government.

SAFE STAFFING LEVELS IN ALL SETTINGS

The Safe Nurse Staffing Levels legislation, and its ratio of no more than seven patients in Wales to one nurse, is very positive and we want to see safe minimum staffing levels extended to all staff groups in all settings. It is worrying that some health boards have reduced ward cleaning standards to save money on the appointment of the appropriate level of domestic and housekeeping staff.



ACTION TO REDUCE AGENCY COSTS

The amount spent using agency staff is unacceptable. We want immediate caps on the fees agencies can charge and greater use of existing staff on overtime at enhanced rates.

The key to cutting agency costs however is to fill vacancies and reduce sickness across the service. Welsh Government has funded additional nurse training places but the benefits will not be realised for 3 years.

One solution could be the reinstatement and extension of in-service, fast-track training of healthcare support workers to attain professional/registered qualifications whilst continuing to receive full salary. This would provide an additional pool of staff and a preferable option to agencies.

Additionally, making the bank rates of pay more competitive would encourage staff to use the bank rather than going to agencies for additional shifts.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

It was right to introduce a clinical response model for the Welsh Ambulance Service and more outcome-based targets should be rolled out across emergency services including in emergency (A&E) departments.

Improved access to GP and dental surgeries outside of 'normal' working hours would take pressure off emergency services. People are reluctant to use out-of-hours services as these are often not easily accessible and patients frequently turn up at A&E. GP services should be available 24/7 in A&E departments to allow for the patient to be directed immediately to a GP rather than taking the time of an emergency doctor. This could work in conjunction with the proposed 111 service. We would support greater promotion of the Choose Well campaign.



SEVEN DAY WORKING

We will work with Welsh Government to develop seven-day services where there is a clinical need. Additional services must be fully funded, sufficiently staffed and employees' terms and conditions protected.

STANDARDS OF CARE

The spot inspection initiative helps ensure high standards of healthcare and should be extended across all health settings on an unannounced basis.

Vital to ensuring high standards of care is the ability of staff to feel confident that reporting failings will be taken seriously and will be acted upon and that they will not suffer detriment as a result of doing so. Adequate protections for care whistleblowers must be implemented.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Welsh government should appoint a Minister for Mental Health in Wales to ensure mental health is given equal status with other health and community services. The Minister would have responsibility for improving access to mental health services and in particular, ensure adequate services for children. This would help to remove the stigma often associated with mental health.

With an ever-aging population, dementia will continue to be a challenge. UNISON is campaigning for properly funded, staffed and supported dementia care services.

The Union for Nursing & Midwifery Students



PATIENT INFORMATION

Allowing patient information to be shared between health boards would save money. It would also provide a better patient experience as people are not forced to undergo repeat tests with different health boards.

PROCUREMENT

Purchasing supplies through an all-Wales procurement process is often more costly than alternative local sourcing. The most cost-effective sourcing should take priority and procurement should be ethical and sustainable.

PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH

Welsh government should continue to promote healthy lifestyles to reduce demand on the NHS and social services. This should include encouraging activities in all age groups and healthy, inexpensive dietary options.

We also support the provision of defibrillators in public places backed by a greater promotion of how to use defibrillators and the work of Volunteer Community First Responders.

UNISON Cymru/Wales has also produced a general manifesto as well as special mini manifestos for Local Government and Education. To obtain copies or further copies of this UNISON Health manifesto, please contact a.gittins@unison.co.uk