

Dr Andrew Goodall
Director General Health & Social Services/NHS Wales Chief
Executive
Welsh Government

22 March 2021

Dear Dr Goodall

Public Accounts Committee's observations following your reflection session (1 March 2021)

Thank you for attending the Public Accounts Committee meeting on Monday 1 March. The Committee were very appreciative of your time and reflections on your main achievements during this Senedd term and the key challenges within your portfolio, together with the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I, and the Committee Members, wish to record our appreciation to you and your staff, along with all the staff who are employed by NHS Wales for the way they have adapted to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic whilst maintaining, as best they can, the normal activities of the NHS.

There were some points arising from the meeting that Members wished to record their observations on. Given we are at now reaching the end of this Senedd Term, I suggest your response be directed to the incoming Chair of the successor Committee.

- We raised concerns regarding the Welsh Government's strategy for reinforcing the NHS Wales workforce given the levels of exhaustion amongst staff and increasing sickness absence. We discussed the potential for retired clinicians being brought in to assist with the vaccination programme to relieve some of the pressures on the NHS in Wales and you referred to 'some good rule work' that Aneurin Bevan UHB had put in place to take



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more pragmatic approach, allowing for that accreditation of existing experience. We hope that this type of approach is being mainstreamed across the wider NHS in Wales.

- We raised concerns about the figures, as of last December, relating to 225,000 patients in Wales waiting over 36 weeks to start their treatment. We noted that during the time that has elapsed since last December these figures are likely to have increased. We appreciate these are very challenging times but are concerned about how the NHS in Wales will manage the competing demands of phasing back normal services during the recovery phase while also maintaining Covid-19 provision within the existing resources.

We note that this issue is not solely about waiting lists but part of the wider 'reset and the recovery process' for the NHS that you referred to during the meeting, which will require investment but also offer a changed service to the population of Wales. You stated that 'A Healthier Wales' strategy will give the Welsh Government the momentum to make those changes.

We are not yet convinced that there is a clear plan for taking this process forward at this stage nor is it clear to us exactly how 'A Healthier Wales' will keep momentum up. This is a matter our successor Committee will need to keep a watching brief over.

- Finally, you will be aware of the Committee's long-standing interest in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and we note from the evidence session that there are some areas within BCUHB that still require progress including mental health services.

Our forthcoming Legacy Report will recommend that our successor Committee seeks regular updates on the improvements at BCUHB in the areas identified as part of the de-escalation status to targeted intervention,



and the Welsh Government's effectiveness at ensuring improvements through its Escalation and Intervention Arrangements.

I hope you find these observations useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Ramsay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Nick Ramsay MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

