PRESS STATEMENT

Community Health Councils respond to the publication of the Health and Social Care (Quality & Engagement) (Wales) Bill

Today, the Welsh Government has introduced a Bill to create new duties and responsibilities relating to quality and engagement in health and social care in Wales.

CHCs in Wales welcome the proposals in the Bill to introduce a new duty of candour and to strengthen the duty of quality in the NHS.

The Bill also proposes replacing Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales.

CHCs have a long and proud history. Over the past 45 years, volunteer members and staff have worked tirelessly to reflect the views and represent the interests of people and communities in their NHS.

The introduction of a new Bill provides an opportunity to build on this legacy by introducing a stand-alone, independent and genuinely stronger people’s voice body working across health and social care in Wales.

We welcome the broad aims for the new body set out by the Welsh Government in its Bill. In order to realise those aims it is vital that the new body is equipped with the right tools to do the job.
John Pearce, Chair of the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales said:

“The activities of the new body must reflect what people tell us is important to them; must build on what is valued within our current arrangements; and must learn from the experience in other parts of the UK when changing the way peoples voices are represented.

We know that people want a new body to be able to engage directly with service users when they are accessing care.

We think it’s important that a new body is able to do this without first needing the permission of health and care providers to do so.

We also know that people want the new body to have teeth. They want it to represent their interests and for health and care bodies to have to consider their views and respond.

We believe that health and care organisations should therefore be required to respond (in public where this is appropriate) to representations made by the new body acting in the interests of people and communities.”

CHCs want to see clear duties and responsibilities placed on health and care organisations in this regard so that a new body has all the tools it needs to be strong, independent and effective in representing the interests of people in health and social care.

The establishment of a new body will necessarily take some time. In the meantime, CHCs will continue to carry out their existing duties and responsibilities, working hard every day to reflect the views and represent the interests of people in Wales.

ENDS.
NOTE TO EDITORS

The Board of CHCs represents the collective voice of the 7 CHCs in Wales.

CHCs are the independent watch-dog of NHS services within Wales. They encourage and enable members of the public to be actively involved in decisions affecting the design, development and delivery of healthcare for their families and local communities.

Acting on behalf of their local population, CHCs routinely monitor the performance of NHS services in their area as well as respond to service developments and changes.

CHCs maintain a continuous dialogue with the public through a wide range of community networks, direct contact with patients, families and carers through enquiries, a Complaints Advocacy Service, visiting activities and through public and Patient surveys.

Each of the 7 CHCs in Wales represents the “Patient voice” within their respective geographical areas.

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