



A Healthier Wales: A Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care

Council of Deans of Health written submission - September 2019

Cyngor Deoniaid Iechyd Cymru/The Council of Deans of Health Wales is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. The Council of Deans of Health represents 84 UK university faculties engaged in education and research for nursing, midwifery and allied health professions. Our seven member institutions in Wales work together with policy makers to help shape the education and research of the future healthcare workforce in Wales.

Executive summary

1. Universities are central partners in the development of the future healthcare workforce in Wales, working with practice, commissioners, the Welsh Government, further education, the independent and voluntary sectors and regulators to ensure that students have a positive experience during their studies, meet the requirements of registration, and have successful and fulfilling careers.
2. Healthcare higher education is expensive and resource intensive. For some healthcare professions the current commissioned price is inadequate, particularly for high cost programmes in the allied health professions, making delivery unattractive to education providers. A more sustainable funding model which takes into account the true cost of delivery must be developed.
3. The education sector and prospective students need certainty about future student support arrangements. The current NHS Wales Bursary has been confirmed until 2021. The Council supports the continuation of bursary arrangements in Wales. It submitted a detailed response to the 2018 consultation on healthcare student support arrangements.
4. Universities need good advanced notice of commissioning arrangements in order to plan future provision and investment.
5. The Council welcomes the planned development of a recruitment campaign for healthcare programmes and the establishment of a national health and social care careers service. We recommend a sustained, high-profile national recruitment campaign that demonstrates the importance of careers in healthcare and the diverse career pathways available in Wales.
6. The Council supports widening participation and access into healthcare careers. Flexible pathways and apprenticeships can serve to complement workforce growth. However, the experience from

England has highlighted difficulties with the implementation and delivery of apprenticeships. University-based programmes are the fastest and most effective way to develop the workforce at scale and pace. Investment in priority workforce areas should ordinarily be channelled through university-based education.

7. The Council supports the draft strategy's intention to reflect the Welsh language. More information is required on how this will be enacted.
8. The finalised version of the workforce strategy should inform the work currently being undertaken by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and KPMG to develop plans for the future commissioning of healthcare higher education in Wales.

Responses

In relation to the theme of valuing our workforce

1. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver *A Healthier Wales*?

Valuing the existing and future workforce is essential for ensuring that Wales has the correct number of healthcare professionals with the right skills mix to best meet the healthcare needs of the population. Parity of esteem within and across the health and social care workforce is critically important in enabling all staff to feel valued. Flexible employment options, including role development, working hours and contract arrangements will also become increasingly important for retention and making healthcare careers more attractive.

2. If not – what is missing?

N/A.

3. Are the emerging priorities and potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes the development of a staff retention plan, the co-production of workforce standards and the implementation of a health and wellbeing framework to provide physical and mental wellbeing support. It is important that the framework reflects the needs of both existing staff and students. Positive practice learning environments are important for meeting the educational needs of students and increasing the likelihood that as registrants these individuals will seek employment in the organisation where they have trained.

4. If not what else would you like to see?

Opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) are essential for the progression and retention of existing and future staff. The expectations of existing staff and the increasingly complex and chronic healthcare needs of the population mean many professionals will need to take on new and advanced roles. The Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) published future

nurse and forthcoming future midwife standards as well as the upcoming review of standards across the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) regulated professions will continue to lead to changes in what is expected of the clinical, communication and digital skills of future registrants. Continued investment in CPD opportunities to allow existing staff to step up to better meet patient need must be recognised as an immediate priority within this theme.

In relation to the theme of seamless working

5. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

Seamless working is central to the ambitions of *A Healthier Wales* through creating a whole system approach to health and social care. Its effective implementation will be crucial to ensuring that health and social care services are increasingly delivered within primary and community care settings. The development of new models of health and social care, including via the Primary Care Clusters, Regional Partnership Boards, and Public Service Boards, will be necessary for this. Universities should be involved in strategic workforce planning at national, regional and local levels. This would fulfill the call for continuous engagement and strategic partnerships with the education sector in *A Healthier Wales*.¹

Universities are keen to work with partners to better enable seamless care. This must serve as an opportunity to increase practice placement provision across different providers, including in the voluntary and independent sector and in social care. This will give students valuable insights into working in different parts of the health and social care system and better prepare them for future employment in these settings.

6. If not - what is missing?

N/A.

7. Are the emerging priorities and potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes the intention to support skills development across the whole workforce. A focus on carers and volunteers also provides an opportunity to cascade information about healthcare careers to potential applicants. We know that many registrants embark upon healthcare professional careers as a direct result of personal experience. This must not be overlooked in growing the future workforce.

8. If not what else would you like to see?

The Council awaits further information about potential new roles within the health and social care sector. These could be useful in adding to the skills mix, allowing existing staff to operate at the top of their skillset, and providing routes into the professions. It is important that more detail is

¹ The Welsh Government, 2018, *A Healthier Wales*, p31.

provided on the regulation and funding of any new roles, including commissioning and contracting arrangements. Support may be needed for education providers and employers to implement any new roles.

In relation to the theme of digital

9. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

The digital transformation of health and social care services over the coming years is likely to be fundamental.² The better implementation and use of digital technology and data is a key priority within *A Healthier Wales* and the current and future workforce must be equipped with the skills to meet this challenge. The potential for the extensive use of genomics, artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics will lead to significant changes in pre-registration curricula. Universities are not complacent about these developments and are continually updating their programmes to match current evidence and best practice.

10. If not – what is missing?

N/A.

11. Are the emerging priorities and potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes the planned creation of a digital education programme to develop digital literacy skills in the whole workforce. As the Topol Review indicates, an open attitude to collaboration between disciplines, including between staff with both clinical and digital skills, is needed.³ Enabling the existing workforce to acquire new skills to undertake new roles linked to digital innovation will be necessary. Education providers are keen to engage with this work and thinking to develop new and amended roles to reflect digital innovation.

The Welsh Government has an important role to ensure that every child in Wales develops the prerequisite digital skills necessary to successfully navigate future study and employment opportunities, especially in health and social care.

12. If not what else would you like to see?

More work is required to fully understand how the Welsh Government, NHS Wales, universities, industry and other stakeholders will harness the potential benefits of new digital technologies within pre-registration education for the benefit of patients. This includes the detail of the digital literacy development programme. Developing an online digital platform was a key priority in A

² Health Education England, 2019, [The Topol Review](#)

³ Ibid., p57

*Healthier Wales*⁴ and the draft strategy should also include an action around enabling all staff to be confident users of this innovation within the intended national standards.⁵

HEIW may need to provide financial support to universities to enable greater education via digital and distance learning and to ensure healthcare students benefit from computer science and engineering lessons, as highlighted by the Topol Review.⁶

In relation to the theme of attraction and recruitment

13. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

The Council welcomes the planned development of a recruitment campaign for healthcare programmes. We recommend a sustained, high-profile national recruitment campaign that demonstrates the importance of healthcare careers and the diverse career options available in Wales. This will help to increase domestic workforce supply, which may become more important considering the implications of Brexit.

Any recruitment campaign needs to be well-resourced and build on the successes of Train.Work.Live. Whilst there is a need to develop specific and targeted campaigns for vulnerable professions, it must ensure adequate coverage is given to the full range of potential healthcare careers. Visible career maps for all grades of nursing, midwifery and AHP staff, including signposting and access criteria would also be useful.

The health and social care sector must be a place where people want to work. Therefore, any campaign should also challenge negative images about healthcare careers that have become prevalent in media coverage in recent years and highlight the advanced roles that various healthcare professionals undertake across a range of practice settings.

14. If not - what is missing?

N/A.

15. Are the emerging priorities and potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes the emerging priorities in this area, including the development of a national health and social care careers service. This must work to increase the visibility and knowledge of health and social care careers amongst school pupils. This is particularly important for primary age pupils, due to the development of gendered notions about different careers roles, which can be acquired early in life. This can negatively affect application choices later in life. Local

⁴ The Welsh Government, 2018, *A Healthier Wales*, p25

⁵ *Ibid.*, p26

⁶ Health Education England, 2019, *The Topol Review*, p17

universities should be enabled to work with the careers service to assist with efforts to recruit students into graduate level healthcare education.

16. If not what else would you like to see?

One emerging priority is to consider ‘the use of incentives and bursaries for shortage areas.’ The education sector needs further information on this and how it will link to the current NHS Wales bursary.

The current NHS Wales Bursary has been confirmed until 2021. The education sector and prospective students need certainty about future student support arrangements. The Council supports the continuation of bursary arrangements in Wales, as reflected in our detailed response to the 2018 consultation on healthcare student support arrangements.

Universities need clarification about future arrangements in order to plan future provision and investment. Only a stable and sufficient funding position will allow universities to create additional student places to meet workforce need.

In relation to the theme of education and learning

17. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

Universities are important partners in the development of the future healthcare workforce in Wales, working with practice, commissioners, the Welsh Government, further education, the independent and voluntary sectors and regulators to ensure that students have a positive experience during their studies, meet the requirements of registration, and have successful and fulfilling careers.

The Council and our members have been engaged with HEIW’s strategic review of healthcare professional education. The final version of this workforce strategy should inform the work currently being undertaken by HEIW and KPMG to develop plans for the future commissioning of healthcare higher education in Wales.

Healthcare higher education is expensive and resource intensive. For some healthcare professions the current commissioned price is inadequate, particularly for high cost programmes in the allied health professions. If the costs of delivery are unmet this disincentivises providers from continuing provision. A more sustainable funding model which takes into account the real costs of delivery must be developed.

In England, the Office for Students (OfS) currently provides a teaching grant to universities in England to provide healthcare programmes with additional funding.⁷ This is in response to a

⁷ Office for Students, 2018, [Guide to Funding 2018-19](#), p16

HEFCE commissioned costing study for nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions in England⁸, which outlines the true cost of delivery for these subjects. Some healthcare programmes, which are particularly high cost receive an additional supplement.⁹ This is a policy currently not implemented in Wales.

A Healthier Wales provides an excellent opportunity to better meet the healthcare needs of the Welsh population. This transformation should be used to increase the number of practice placements available to learners, especially in primary and community settings.

Multi-disciplinary teams are also important for the delivery of *A Healthier Wales*. Universities are committed to providing and delivering opportunities for multi-disciplinary education where appropriate. Due regard must be given to both the individual skillsets of registered professionals and opportunities for multi-professional working within models of integrated care.

18. If not - what is missing?

The Council supports the ambition of the draft strategy that it should be reflective of the Welsh language. However, the need to develop the Welsh language skills of the health and social care workforce does not feature sufficiently in the strategy. Measures to enable more staff to benefit from Welsh language education - in line with *Mwy na Geiriau (More than Just Words)*, Cymraeg 2050, and the stated intention of the draft workforce strategy in *A Healthier Wales*¹⁰ - should be included in the workforce strategy.

19. Are the emerging priorities and potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes actions to create strategic partnerships with education providers to inform curriculum development and delivery at all levels.

The Council supports widening participation and access into healthcare careers. The consultation refers to creating innovative approaches to education such as flexible learning offerings and apprenticeships. New roles and routes into the healthcare professions have the potential to help reduce some current workforce pressure, add to the skills mix in the sector, and create more flexible career pathways. It is important that the funding and regulation, including commissioning, contracting, training requirements and competencies, are specified and that support is given to education providers and employers to introduce new roles.

Apprenticeships can serve to complement workforce growth and create more flexible career pathways. The apprenticeship experience in England has highlighted difficulties with the

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<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180319115440/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2017/prereg-costs/>

⁹ Office for Students, 2018, *Guide to Funding 2018-19* p20

¹⁰ The Welsh Government, 2018, *A Healthier Wales*, p32.

implementation and delivery of apprenticeships, including insufficient funding for both educators and providers, overburdensome and duplicative regulation, and small cohort numbers. University-based programmes are the fastest and most effective way to develop the workforce at scale and pace. Investment in priority workforce areas should ordinarily be channelled through university-based education.

Core and common education requirements may be useful in enabling multi-professional learning, particularly in the first year of higher education. However, these must be outcome rather than process-focused and healthcare professional regulation should take precedence. Furthermore, quality improvement is already embedded in education provision, not least owing to regulatory requirements. The NMC's new rules regarding simulation provide some flexibility. However, it remains to be seen how AI can be used to deliver new education and learning. This may require additional funding from the Welsh Government. Finally, more detail is needed on what is meant by 'grow your own' programmes.

20. If not what else would you like to see?

The Council in Wales would like to see an expansion of education provision. The commissioning process in Wales does not currently support four-year Masters programmes, yet several providers in England do run four-year Masters programmes, including in nursing, occupational therapy and diagnostic radiography. Increased provision of postgraduate pre-registration education, which recruits those who already have an undergraduate degree and demonstrate the ability to undertake postgraduate level study, is an additional way to develop the workforce. The Council would like HEIW to consider developing a mixed economy of provision, including more postgraduate options, that would cater to service need and applicant demographics.

A Healthier Wales makes reference to 'opportunities for staff to combine research with clinical roles.'¹¹ Clinical academics and researchers in nursing, midwifery and the allied health disciplines are uniquely placed to contribute to improving and developing clinical services by providing research-based evaluations and recommendations. Clinical academic career pathways in Wales need to be clearer and more post-doctoral posts should be available in both the NHS and academia. This strategy needs to include more information on how clinical academic careers can be further developed within Wales and on investment in expanding research capability, which is important for ensuring the success of *A Healthier Wales*.

The Council has been undertaking work in England on advanced clinical practice (ACP) with Health Education England (HEE). In order to achieve the intentions set out in *A Healthier Wales*, this strategy must include more detail on the development of ACP routes and roles in Wales, which should be accessible to healthcare professionals across the workforce. Universities are ready to assist this work.

¹¹ Ibid., p23

Public health, inclusion health and the prevention agenda will be important to ensuring the success of *A Healthier Wales*. More detail is needed on how the workforce will access opportunities to develop their skillsets in these areas in the strategy.

In relation to the theme of leadership

21. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

A Healthier Wales states that stronger national leadership and direction is needed to deliver on its intentions.¹² Leadership is central for the delivery of health and social care not just at a national level but throughout the system. Registered healthcare professionals all have a duty to act as leaders for their patients and service users.

22. If not – what is missing?

N/A.

23. Are the emerging priorities and the potential actions sufficient?

The Council welcomes the intention to develop student leadership academies across all universities in Wales. It would be keen to work with HEIW and others to cascade learning from the Council's UK-wide [Student Leadership Programme](#).

The development of a multi-disciplinary graduate leadership development scheme will provide an opportunity to review preceptorship programmes, which are critical for retaining newly qualified staff and enabling them to consolidate their learning. At present the strategy fails to adequately address preceptorship. This period is the most important stage in the career of healthcare workers, as it is the time when new registrants decide whether their chosen career is really for them or not. Consequently, this period must be taken seriously and increased investment to support newly qualified registrants may be required.

The creation of a digital leadership portal is welcome, but resources and developmental opportunities for students should also be included.

24. If not what else would you like to see?

More detail on the development of a collective leadership strategy and a common approach to talent management and succession planning is needed.

In relation to the theme of workforce supply and shape

25. Does this theme support the workforce transformation needed to deliver A Healthier Wales?

¹²Ibid., p32

Universities are a central partner in workforce development and supply and they must be involved in strategic planning at a national, regional, and local level. Healthcare faculties across Wales are constantly in the process of reviewing and modernising the way healthcare education is delivered. This includes investing in simulation facilities, blending different teaching and learning methods, and facilitating more interdisciplinary learning. Universities are therefore best placed to deliver the education for new and advanced roles.

The Council supports the development of a standardised minimum data set and the collection of better workforce data to optimise work. This will help to measure and predict workforce supply and demand and ensure local workforce need is best met.

26. If not – what is missing?

N/A.

27. Are the emerging priorities and actions we have identified sufficient?

The Council welcomes plans to target key shortage areas across the short, medium, and long term. We are particularly pleased to see reference to CPD here, which is central to the success of the wider strategy. We are supportive of implementing a common approach to addressing gaps in workforce intelligence and agreeing a consistent workforce planning approach across health and social care. Universities and their partners in practice will be crucial to ensuring that this is successful.

28. If not what else would you like to see?

We are pleased to see reference to both investing in research and attraction and retention initiatives. These are key priorities that need to be progressed before 2024-27 and 2028-2030 respectively.

Transparent career pathways are needed from support staff roles to consultant level posts and the place of education in career progression needs to be made explicit. This should include detailed information about advanced clinical practitioner roles. This should be linked to the 'Train.Work.Live' campaign and any future recruitment campaigns.

For more information contact:

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