

# NHS Wales: *The truth*

- **The financial facts.** The Welsh NHS is facing unprecedented financial challenges. The Welsh Government has had its funding from the UK Government savagely slashed – £1.5 billion in real terms since 2010-11.
- **The financial facts.** 42 per cent of the Welsh Government budget goes on health and social services. Despite the UK cuts to their block funding, in this year's draft budget the Welsh Government are spending an extra £425 million on health.
- **The financial facts.** The Welsh Government continues to spend more than 2 per cent more per head on health than is spent in England. Spending on health per person in Wales has more than doubled since 1999.
- **The cross border reality.** There are more English patients registered with Welsh GPs than vice versa. Around 20,000 England residents are registered with GPs in Wales which is higher than the approximately 15,100 Wales residents who are registered with GPs in England.
- **The cross border reality.** NHS Wales pays a tariff for the treatment of Welsh patients who travel to England. The Welsh border is particularly porous, not least in areas of mid-east Wales – patients from Powys, a particularly rural area, go over the border for treatment as standard as there are no secondary care facilities in the county. Hereford Hospital would not be able to sustain itself if it weren't for its Welsh patients.
- **The cross border reality.** When it comes to secondary care, the cross border flow is generally from Wales to England. Again this is largely due to geographic convenience and travel to the nearest possible specialist centre. This is particularly true in North Wales where depending on the patient's condition; they will receive treatment in North Wales or just over the border in Chester or Liverpool. This is nothing new. In fact, the Countess of Chester hospital was set up to serve both sides of the border. It is a long way to Cardiff from North Wales.
- **Beyond the rhetoric.** The myth being put about is that patients from Wales are so unhappy with their treatment they are flocking to England. This is simply not the case. The National Survey for Wales found that nine out of ten people are happy with their NHS care in Wales. Some Welsh patients will receive specialist services at English hospitals, including specialist cancer care and cardiac care, where necessary. This is because hospitals require a critical amount of patients to operate some services. Morriston Hospital in Swansea serves as the specialist burns centre for Wales and the South West of England and Velindre Cancer Centre in Cardiff is one of the largest cancer centres in the UK and provides specialist cancer services to over 1.5 million people in South East Wales and beyond.
- **Beyond the rhetoric.** Crude comparisons being made between the NHS in England and the NHS in Wales are conveniently devoid of actual substance. They do not compare like for like – NHS Wales and NHS England have different means of measuring outcomes – and Wales has very specific challenges such as a higher proportion of older citizens, the highest rates of long term limiting illness in the UK, a population with more needs and the geographically complexities presented by huge swathes of rural areas. An independent report by the Nuffield Trust demonstrated that none of the UK's four countries are consistently ahead of one another; "There is little sign that one country is consistently moving ahead of the others".
- **Beyond the rhetoric.** Claims abound that patients are more at risk in Welsh hospitals than in England and that Sir Bruce Keogh of NHS England wrote to his counterpart last year warning on mortality rates. This is fear mongering at its very worse – not only is it not based on fact, it can scare people and is grossly offensive to our hard working NHS staff. Sir Bruce Keogh is the medical director of NHS England and in his email to the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Wales, he admitted that there is insufficient data to conclude that an investigation should be carried out in any Welsh hospital. Sir Bruce also acknowledged that even where there was data he could not vouch for its accuracy. The Welsh Government introduced a new spot checks regime in May this year and an independent report on spot checks at all Welsh hospitals found no systematic issues and praised care patients received from Welsh NHS staff.

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## Borderline – the dividing lines between the NHS in England and Wales

### England

The current UK government has overseen a top-down re-organisation of the NHS in England which is estimated to come with a £3 billion price tag. The Health and Social Care Act removed the remaining barriers to privatisation of the NHS in England by giving GPs control of £65 billion of the NHS budget and forcing them to contract out services for patients or face legal challenges from the private sector. Rapid privatisation is already taking place with 56 per cent of new contracts going to the private sector. Companies such as Virgin Care, Boots, Lloyds, Serco, Sainsbury's, Care UK and many others are already delivering and bidding for NHS services, from ambulance services to pathology. The introduction of Health commissioners means moving money out of hospitals and GP's surgeries to pay for another layer of bureaucracy.

### Wales

The NHS in Wales was re-organised in 2009 to remove the internal market and commissioner and provider split – it has co-operation not competition at its core. The Welsh NHS remains free from privatisation, with the purchase of NHS funded care from private hospitals and clinics is frowned upon and since April 2007 prescriptions have been free to people registered with a GP in Wales. Exactly a year later to the day, the introduction of free parking at hospitals across Wales was announced. Today the majority of hospitals in Wales have free parking with the exception of those being where contracts signed before the changes were brought in are still running their course. NHS Wales directly employs over 72 thousand people, making in Wales' biggest employer.

