



Eich llais mewn iechyd | Your voice in health
a gofal cymdeithasol | and social care

Llais' response to the Cabinet Secretary's announcement on a 'new deal' for patients: Clearer targets, greater transparency – it will be important that change is felt quickly by the people who use the NHS in Wales

The Welsh Government has announced a new plan to reduce NHS waiting times, improve access to care, and create a new “deal” between the NHS and the public. As the independent body that represents the voice of people in health and care, we want to share our response.

We welcome the ambition and the focus on people. It will be important to shape this change by using peoples' lived experience, provide support for hard working staff, and ensure it is felt by all of us who use NHS services every day.

People are still waiting too long

People across Wales continue to tell us that long waits for test results, diagnosis, and treatment cause them frustration and distress. These delays impact on people's physical and mental health, damage trust, and leave people feeling unsure and unsafe.

We welcome the Cabinet Secretary's pledge to tackle the longest waits and improve diagnostic times. This is a step in the right direction but targets only matter if they lead to real change for people.

A welcome focus on transparency and empowerment

We support the commitment to clearer performance reporting and using the NHS Wales App to provide real-time updates. For too long, people have been left in the dark about their own care. We believe transparency builds trust — not to blame, but to understand and improve.

Digital tools have great potential, but only if they work for everyone. Digital exclusion is still a real issue in many communities. Services must

make sure that everyone, regardless of age, confidence, or access to digital services, can benefit.

A fairer deal – but with compassion

The Cabinet Secretary's "new deal" between the NHS and the public includes removing people from waiting lists if they miss 2 appointments without a good reason.

We understand the pressure missed appointments cause on services. But we also hear every day about the barriers people face in getting to appointments, like poor transport, work commitments, or caring for someone at home.

We also hear that the way NHS appointment systems work often don't reflect people's needs, sometimes providing appointment dates with little or no notice or at times that mean people who rely on public transport can't get there on time.

So, the introduction of any changes on handling waiting lists must be fair and clearly explained and must be supported by improvements in the way appointment systems work so that everyone receives the support and information they need to enable them to meet their appointments.

Funding what works – and sharing it

We agree that funding should go towards what works. But we believe that success should be measured by people's real experiences — not just numbers.

We see great examples of person-centred care across Wales. Services need to understand and share what works for people, and why, as change will happen faster if NHS services across Wales learn from each other.



New approach to surgical waiting lists

The Cabinet Secretary has said that only people who are fit and well enough will be added to treatment waiting lists based on evidence that they recover more quickly.

Helping people get ready for surgery is a good idea but it must not become a barrier. No one should be held back because of long-term conditions or mental health challenges.

Everyone should have easy and equitable access to advice, information and support before treatment. People need to know what they can expect, what is expected of them, what help is available, and how to raise concerns if they are unhappy about their care.

We welcome the focus on supporting people's health before surgery and the commitment to informed choice. That means giving people clear information about risks and alternatives in a way they understand.

Time for action, shaped by people

Professor Medwin Hughes, Chair of the Board of Llais, said:

“This announcement marks an important opportunity to focus our NHS around the people it exists to serve. Targets and technology can help drive improvement but only if they are grounded in the everyday experiences of people, their families and carers, and frontline staff.

People must be supported to be real partners in their own healthcare journey, empowered by the right advice, information and support they need to have a strong voice in how their NHS works for them and those they care for and about.”

Alyson Thomas, Chief Executive of Llais, said:

“Our role is to keep listening — making sure what we hear from people and communities across Wales leads to meaningful, visible change.



That means supporting the NHS to deliver the services people need wherever they live in Wales and holding it accountable when services fall short.

We will focus on helping to make sure people are aware of their rights, that everyone understands people's expectations from our NHS, and that people are supported to meet their responsibilities when using NHS services – so that this new relationship between people and the NHS reflects what matters most to people and communities across Wales.”

Building a stronger relationship between people and the NHS

This is a chance to build a more open and balanced relationship between people and the NHS Wales based on mutual respect, clear communication, and shared responsibility.

Through our national work on rights, expectations and responsibilities, we want to help shape that conversation. And we'll be working to make sure everyone is able to have a voice in that conversation, especially those whose voices aren't always heard.

