

Emergency Care

Get it Right - RIGHT NUMBERS

Emergency Care services have long been a source of concern to the Royal College of Nursing in Wales. Emergency care nursing is by definition a highly pressured role but too often our members are finding themselves under pressure resulting from a lack of investment in community care, unsafe staffing levels or a refusal to take advantage of innovative nursing roles. This lack of progress can translate into a poor patient experience. Progress in improving emergency care services by the old NHS Trusts was inconsistent across Wales and lacked a national approach.

The 2009 NHS reconfiguration provides the Welsh Assembly Government with an unparalleled opportunity to improve emergency care and RCN Wales has identified the key areas in which we believe improvements are needed. There is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that patient outcome is linked to nurse staffing levels and skill mix. Monitoring of these figures creates a statistical record that can easily be used as an important indicator of outcome or risk. Emergency Nurse Practitioner posts are too rare in Wales and the NHS has been particularly slow in recognising the advantage of non-medical prescribing to emergency care departments. Quite simply the patient experience would be improved tremendously by

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- Local Health Boards should monitor nurse staffing levels and skill mix in emergency care departments and provide this information to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure effective and appropriate performance management of Local Health Boards.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should maximise the potential of the nursing workforce within emergency care services utilising Emergency Nurse Practitioners for Minor Injuries and Illness, Alcohol liaison Nurses and Mental Health Nurses.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should accelerate the introduction of Independent Nurse Prescribers within emergency care departments.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure transferability of nursing skills throughout NHS Wales, avoiding the need to “re-certify” / duplicate training programmes.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure Local Health Boards improve access to primary care and coordinate its development with that of emergency care.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure Local Health Boards invest in enhanced Community Care (including nursing home capacity and community nurses), particularly for patients with Long Term Conditions and dignified “end of life” care.
 - NHS Wales should empower healthcare professionals to, where appropriate, assess and treat patients without the need for admission to Emergency Departments.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure Local Health Boards invest in the provision of comprehensive and timely diagnostic services 24/7.

avoiding unnecessary delays. There is inconsistent access across Wales to ‘out-of-hours’ primary care. Indeed in some part of Wales ‘in hours’ primary care itself is difficult to obtain. RCN Wales recognises that the Welsh Assembly Government is developing a national framework for primary care provision for the public and hopes that this will assist with the inappropriate demands placed on emergency care services. Pressure on emergency care services can come from the inability of the hospital to ensure a safe and timely discharge of the patient back to their home. Investment in nursing home capacity and community care nurses also enables patients to be maintained in the community avoiding the need to attend Emergency Departments unless essential. If the actions below are implemented by the Welsh Assembly Government they will transform emergency care services in Wales and renew both the enthusiasm of the emergency care professionals and the confidence of the public.

get it
right

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