What about health?
Three steps to a healthier nation
A manifesto from BMA Cymru Wales
‘We look after doctors so they can look after you.’
The British Medical Association (BMA) is the voice of doctors and medical students in the UK.

The BMA is a voluntary professional association and an independent trade union which represents doctors and medical students from all branches of medicine all over the UK.

With a membership of over 7,000 in Wales (and a total membership of over 153,000) we promote the medical and allied sciences, seek to maintain the honour and interests of the medical profession and promote the achievement of high quality healthcare. We are a major stakeholder in the development of health policy.

The BMA is a democratic and member-led organisation, committed to an NHS that remains true to its founding principles – comprehensive, free at the point of care with equal access for all.

Our vision is a profession of highly valued doctors delivering the highest quality health services to patients.
‘As doctors, we have a pivotal role in promoting the highest quality of care for our patients.’
I am delighted to present the BMA Cymru Wales manifesto for the 2016 National Assembly elections.

In the course of the next few months we will work with our members, patients, partner organisations and with policy-makers from all political parties to ensure that the priorities presented in this manifesto are sufficiently addressed by the next Welsh Government.

Doctors across Wales remain highly trusted among the public; this has been the case for many years. Trust, honesty and integrity are central components of the doctor–patient relationship; the professionalism of doctors has enabled this quality relationship to remain intact. This is despite doctors’ workloads being stretched to the limit, despite feeling undervalued and isolated, and despite investment in the NHS not keeping up with the rise in demand.

The delivery of care in the right place, at the right time, by the right professional requires robust workforce planning, an open and supportive workplace culture and evidence based policy making. Only with the changes outlined in this manifesto can Wales deliver high-quality and sustainable care to patients by skilled and engaged expert staff.

With our fellow healthcare professions we are committed to working proactively with government to realise this vision.

In this manifesto, our members have identified three key areas which encompass their priorities for health in Wales over the next five years:

**Doctors in Wales call on political parties to commit to a sustainable and high-quality NHS for the future by:**
1. Supporting the public to make healthy lifestyle choices;
2. Creating a sustainable NHS in Wales;
3. Assuring the quality and safety of patient care.

Dr Phil Banfield
Chair, BMA Welsh Council
‘Regardless of their circumstances, every individual in Wales should be supported to make healthier lifestyle choices.’
Step one

Supporting the people of Wales to live healthier lives

Doctors in Wales want the public to be better supported to make healthy lifestyle choices.

In order to tackle persistent inequalities in health, and to protect the most vulnerable in society, health and wellbeing implications need to be prioritised in all aspects policy making.

Reflecting the challenging economic environment, and potential divergence in healthcare policy across the devolved nations, there needs to be a clear focus on enabling individuals to develop an increased awareness of, and sense of responsibility for, their own health and wellbeing.

Everyone must have adequate opportunities to make informed choices. Government policy must prioritise challenging the link between poverty and poor health outcomes, addressing head-on the socio-economic causes of ill health. As part of an overarching strategy, evidence-based policies to tackle behaviours that are strongly linked to health inequalities must be implemented.

BMA Cymru Wales calls on political parties to:

Provide a culture where alcohol is enjoyed safely
To achieve this we would support the devolution of further relevant powers enabling:
– Minimum pricing at no less than 50p per unit;
– Enforcement of responsible retailing and clear labelling (including calorie content);
– Greater emphasis on the provision of treatment for alcohol misuse;
– Restricting advertising (including sponsorship).
British Medical Association Four steps to a healthier nation – A manifesto from the British Medical Association
Step one

Provide more smoke-free open places
Despite positive interventions, smoking in Wales remains the leading single cause of serious illness and avoidable early death. The new government must:
– Create more smoke-free open places;
– Restrict the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed public places and implement a regulatory framework for their sale and use.

Safeguard against the damaging effect of physical inactivity and poor diet
Individuals who are overweight and physically inactive have an increased risk of a wide range of serious life threatening and chronic diseases. There are substantial health and social care costs associated with the treatment of obesity, and it is close to 100 per cent preventable. It is essential that the new government develops policy to:
– Implement interventions to curb the promotion and availability of unhealthy foods;
– Ensure sufficient and convenient opportunities for sport and exercise;
– Provide a comprehensive strategic approach to nutrition and exercise.

Implement Health Impact Assessments (HIA)
BMA Cymru Wales regards a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as an essential legislative tool to ensure health outcomes are adequately prioritised, and would help Wales to become a world leader in the application of public health policy. The new government needs to:
– Place Health Impact Assessments on a mandatory legal footing.

Improve levels of literacy and numeracy
Education can be a major determinant of social wellbeing and health and we are concerned by the poor levels of educational attainment in Wales and its implications for the health of the nation. The new government must:
– Act quickly to improve the levels of literacy and numeracy in Wales to similar levels enjoyed by the other UK nations.
‘Patients and the public must have confidence that the incoming Government will give an unequivocal commitment to ensuring a financially sustainable National Health Service in Wales.’
Step two

Creating a sustainable NHS in Wales

Doctors in Wales want a robust and sustainable NHS

A committed and professional expert medical workforce remains at the heart of the Welsh NHS. It is essential that our dedicated professionals are supported, recognised and appropriately remunerated within a stable NHS.

Today’s doctors have multiple roles: they are clinicians, leaders, teachers, managers and researchers. High-quality patient care goes hand in hand with a highly motivated and committed medical workforce. And yet many BMA members report that they feel increasingly de-professionalised, repeatedly devalued and worryingly isolated.

It is essential that government provides the resources, policy, and structures for professionalism to flourish.

To support this, workforce planning should be dynamic, robust and pro-active, taking into account medical training requirements and the changing service demands and workforce composition.

BMA Cymru Wales calls on political parties to:

Create a workforce fit for the future
The medical workforce is at the heart of NHS Wales. The new government must:
– Take a whole-system strategic approach to workforce planning across primary, community, secondary and social care;
– Workforce planning must take into account the changing service demands and the composition of the workforce, in particular the challenges of an ageing workforce;
What about health? Three steps to a healthier nation
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Step two

- Take action to address the urgent recruitment and retention challenge to ensure that we have the right staff in the right place at the right time;
- Ensure that high-quality undergraduate education, postgraduate training, and continuing professional development remain a priority.

Prioritise clinical engagement
Better engagement between health service leaders, managers and doctors should achieve a more coherent and long term vision of health service provision, as well as ensuring there is a consistent focus on high quality care. The new government must:
- Involve front-line clinicians in developing the strategic direction and delivery of services, rather than non-clinical managers determining reconfiguration for financial savings;
- Involve doctors in day to day decision making – engage doctors locally;
- Create environments that are open and supportive, where suggestions for improvement can easily be put forward, acted upon and shared.

Improve data collection
Adequate data on the medical workforce is necessary not only for the effective delivery of current care, but also for sustainable workforce planning, and in understanding the requirements for medical training provision. The new government must:
- Improve the quality and accuracy of NHS data collection – particularly around workforce numbers and staff vacancies (which are not currently collected).
‘It is time to support and protect frontline services so that clinical quality and patient safety, rather than targets, are paramount across the NHS in Wales.’
Step three

Assuring the quality and safety of patient care

Doctors in Wales want safe services for patients

Our members feel that more could be done to support and protect frontline services so that clinical quality and patient safety, rather than targets, are paramount across the NHS.

A survey of our members suggested that there is a need for government to recognise that the imposition of financial or organisational performance targets can create incentives that conflict with clinical judgement. We would advocate for the reform of RTT targets to focus on prioritising clinical need and to therefore measure outcome performance - rather than process performance.

Doctors care passionately about their patients and a key part of that is having the confidence to be able to raise concerns on their behalf. To make this a reality we need a culture of openness within the NHS, not one where raising concerns can leave doctors feeling harassed or marginalised. Raising concerns by staff should be welcomed, positively reinforced and acted upon so that it becomes routine and everybody’s business to identify and put right concerns early wherever they occur.

Alongside this there should be a comprehensive reform of Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW). HIW does not currently provide the necessary assurances that standards of care are being met and maintained.

BMA Cymru Wales calls on political parties to:

Create a culture of honest and open communication
Creating an open, transparent and supportive culture, where both concerns and ideas from staff, patients and their relatives are welcomed and considered, will deliver wide ranging service improvement (in both design and delivery). The new government must:
– Encourage a supportive, open, honest professional environment in which doctors and other health professionals feel able to raise
concerns about patient care without fear of reprisals;

– Engage with NHS professions, and their relevant representative organisations, to replace the current ‘whistleblowing’ policy and make it’s successor a central and visible component of a positive NHS Wales culture through the creation of a ‘Raising Concerns Charter’ that is regularly renewed.

Ensure patient care is assessed through the lens of clinical effectiveness
We recognise the political necessity for targets, and that they can help to focus activity and measure progress. However it is important that targets for patient care are based on clinical evidence and are appropriate for the care of patients. The new government must:

– Remove arbitrary targets and replace them with a clinical needs based model;

– Develop referral pathways that acknowledge and reflect the value of clinical expertise;

– Ensure the quality of patient care is assessed by clinical effectiveness, safety and responsiveness rather than financial savings or short-term political imperatives.

Reform Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW)
HIW is not fit for purpose and does not currently carry the confidence of the medical profession. The new government must:

– Reform HIW to make it as independent as possible whilst strengthening its remit and functions;

– Ensure that both the inspection and the regulatory side of HIWs work are resourced and balanced effectively;

– Make sure that HIW covers all of the places where healthcare is provided and promoted;

– Allow HIW access to relevant information from Health Boards and Trusts, and from other stakeholders such as CHCs and the Wales Audit Office in a timely manner. The remit and work of these organisations should complement each other appropriately.
Further reading:
Creating a Healthier NHS for Wales: openness, transparency and raising concerns.

Service reviews: what are they, their aims and how should they happen.

Food for thought: promoting healthy diets among children and young people.
http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/improving-and-protecting-health/obesity

General Practice – A Prescription For A Healthy Future
http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/negotiating-for-the-profession/bma-general-practitioners-committee/gpc-members/gpc-wales

Briefing on Health Impact Assessments

Briefing on Tobacco and Nicotine Products
For further information please contact

Carla Mahoney
Acting Head of Public Affairs
Tel: 02920 474626
Mob: 07500 765994
Email: cmahoney@bma.org.uk

http://communities.bma.org.uk/bmacymruwales/b/weblog
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