A manifesto for health
Two-year review
The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. We are a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. As an association we provide our members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

Based in Cardiff Bay with staff working out of North Wales, BMA Cymru Wales represents doctors and medical students throughout Wales.
Ahead of the 2021 Senedd Election, we launched our manifesto for political parties. This drew on the expertise and experience of doctors, providing key solutions to ongoing challenges within NHS Wales.

Welsh Government has made significant commitments in the last two years, yet the NHS backlogs remain, with relentless pressure facing NHS staff driving many of them to reduce their working hours or leave the NHS altogether. Surveys of BMA Cymru Wales members have found that 55% of respondents are currently suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, emotional distress or other mental health conditions.

To address clinical care staffing shortages, NHS Wales first needs to fully understand the extent of these shortages. We need a sustainable and reliable service which provides the necessary healthcare to ensure the population of Wales achieves its potential.

Dr Iona Collins
Chair, BMA Welsh Council
A valued workforce with a supportive structure

A healthcare workforce that feels valued, supported and healthy is able to provide the best possible levels of support and care for patients.

Enshrine ministerial accountability for staffing levels across the Welsh NHS in legislation, meaning individual clinicians are not blamed when system failures are the root cause.

Welsh Government accept the principle of safe staffing levels for all frontline staff, however noted that this can be achieved in different ways not just via legislation.

BMA Cymru Wales, through engaging with Welsh Government’s Workforce Implementation, continue to push for improved workforce planning and data collection. A Welsh Government group is working to better understand secondary care vacancies and needs; however this is only just starting and progress must continue at pace.

Support doctors by adopting an environment and culture which provides:

– occupational and mental health support
– opportunities for learning and development
– Freedom to Speak up Guardians

BMA Cymru Wales has worked with Welsh Government to develop an all-Wales Occupational Health Service. Welsh Government have since committed to ensure NHS Wales delivers and promotes a new Speaking Safely framework.

However, these still need to be implemented across Health Boards.

N.B BMA Cymru Wales calls are supported by the Royal Colleges Mental Health group
Regular conversations and engagement between Health Boards, management and staff, with the views and opinions of frontline staff being listened to.

Welsh Government’s Planned Care Recovery Plan sets actions to a number of boards and groups to help reduce the patient backlog. Through inclusion in these boards, BMA Cymru Wales continue to play a key role in ensuring staff experiences are heard.

Welsh Government has committed to work with partners to develop and issue guidance and training to support social partnership working. It will also work with partners to agree plans for staff recruitment and retention. These are due to be delivered by July 2023 and there is a need for rapid progress to meet this target.

Ensure Wales has a diverse healthcare workforce, increase representation of women and BAME staff at senior levels and remove barriers that disabled medics face.

Welsh Government has announced 140 places per year at the new North Wales Medical School.

Progress has been made towards supporting International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in Wales, but more long-term support is needed to ensure GP IMGs have the right to remain in the UK when the complete their training.

Welsh Government recently developed an LGTBO+ Action Plan and launched an Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan which could support doctors experiencing frontline harassment and discrimination. However, more detail is needed to understand whether the experiences of frontline healthcare staff are being listened to.

The BMA has launched a UK-wide FREE Forum - the Forum for Racial Equality and Equity – to ensure members views and experiences are heard and acted upon.
Population health

A healthy population is better protected from long-term health conditions and infections.

Establish prevention at the heart of the healthcare system and invest in schemes to build a more resilient Wales. Action on:

- smoking
- obesity
- physical inactivity
- alcohol misuse
- encouraging the uptake of active travel and sport
- providing adequate support for children in particular, those at risk from adverse childhood experiences

Active travel is supported as part of current transport funding across Wales.

Healthy Weight Healthy Wales is providing support for healthy environments, settings, and populations. Additionally, free school meals will be available to all primary school children by 2024.

BMA Cymru Wales welcomes Welsh Government’s commitment to a smoke free Wales by 2030. However, to achieve this, more targeted action is needed, including addressing extensive inequalities experienced across Wales, will be needed.

GPs have agreed in their new contract to support plans to prevent unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and alcohol misuse.

There needs to be appropriate legislation to fully assess the benefits and outcomes of the healthy interventions.

BMA Cymru Wales has been calling for Health Impact Assessments to be brought forward since they were included in the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. While Brexit and the pandemic delayed this work, it has now been outstanding for six years.

In February 2023 Welsh Government outlined that plans for a maximum wait of four weeks when accessing eating disorder services was one of its Welsh NHS priorities. To achieve this, Health Board leaders need to work with frontline staff to understand the services they currently deliver and the challenges they face.
Investment in mental health services and projects to promote the mental wellbeing of the Welsh population.

Welsh Government has launched a mental health workforce action plan. With high levels of vacancies in key areas, this needs urgent action.

Additionally, a key priority is now to improve both physical and mental health services and require Health Boards to allow easy access to CAHMS, adult, and older peoples mental health support.

Increased focus on educating and encouraging patients to better look after their own physical and mental health through investing more in education in schools and public health campaigns.

The NHS Wales app is being developed which will help patients better understand waiting times and assist in managing conditions.

BMA Cymru Wales has supported the new ‘Help Us Help You’ campaign to assist patients and their families to access the right types of medical support for them. More action is needed to ensure this is communicated to patients and families in their communities as at present it appears very few are aware of the campaign or the primary care options available to them.

The previous ‘Choose Well’ campaign was only heard of by 10% of people asked in a 2018 Welsh Government survey.

Create a healthier Wales, with greater opportunities for healthy living, by:
– expanding existing clean air zones and extending their use
– better monitoring of air pollution in areas where the most vulnerable populations live
– improving air quality standards that the previous EU regulations afforded
– supporting health professionals to take local action and provide advice to patients
– phasing-out of coal power stations

Welsh Government announced the roll out of charging points starting with the funding for a minimum of three charging points in all Emergency Departments across Wales. Detail is needed on when these new facilities will be available.

The Environmental Protections (Single Use Plastics) (Wales) Bill is being brought forward to reduce single use plastics, while Welsh Government has announced a Net Zero Strategic Plan, plans to cut vehicle emissions, and support for businesses to cut emissions. BMA Cymru Wales supports such actions to ensure Wales has a healthier population.
A sustainable NHS

Healthcare services in Wales need appropriate levels of funding and workforce planning to be able to effectively support the citizens of Wales and must be supported by a modern IT infrastructure that facilitates the best care for patients.

Increase NHS spending by an appropriate amount each year to:
- keep up with the demand for services
- put the NHS on a sustainable footing
- ensure all staff are appropriately paid for the contribution they make
- set out credible long term funding plans for social care

The 2023/4 draft budget allocates an additional £165million for health and social care, with £15m set aside for real living wage increases for social care staff. However, increases need to be linked to requirements and activity to ensure services get the right amount of support.

With pay having been eroded by over 26% in Wales since 2008, staff saw an initial uplift of 4.5% for 2022/23. Welsh Government has since acknowledged this erosion and agreed that it needs to be restored. A timeline is now needed on how this will be achieved.

Through successful negotiation, we have secured increased investment for patients as part of the Welsh GP contract, and we continue to push for improvements to practice sustainability and viability with both Welsh Government and Health Boards.

Investment should lead to better communication and working between health and social care, particularly around referrals and discharge, to ensure patients receive the best and most appropriate care in a timely way.

An NHS Wales app is being developed to give patients with information to help them take ownership of their health. This will include repeat prescriptions, test results, and non-urgent appointments. A similar app has been available for some time in England and therefore development and roll-out in Wales needs to be a priority.

While Welsh Government has launched the Planned Care Recovery plan, more detail on how additional staff will be recruited and supported is required if the plan is to be effective.

Social care staff have seen a living wage increase and Welsh Government has announced an additional 600 new community beds across Wales, however consultants are reporting to BMA Cymru Wales that they are yet to see where these new beds have been placed and are seeking clarification from Welsh Government.
A manifesto for health

Wales-wide National Executive and a National Primary Care Board and develop a culture that encourages staff learning and progression which will increase workforce retention and make the NHS safer and more cost effective.

An NHS Executive is being set up as a hybrid model from within Welsh Government. However more information is needed on how it will ensure Health Boards and NHS Wales are held to account.

Implement new technologies and processes to provide fast and effective advice and treatments.

This should include improved access to patient information in a secure way including introducing e-prescribing.

Progress is being made towards the roll-out of electronic prescribing in Wales, with BMA Cymru Wales a part of Welsh Government’s advisory and implementation panels.

Similarly, the NHS Wales app is being developed to support primary and secondary care staff to reduce the patient backlog while helping patients find details about their waiting list positions. Progress is needed so that the app can be rolled out to support patients and staff.
We look after doctors so they can look after you