



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Sustaining and Improving Adult Neurosurgery in South Wales

Information on the HCW plans to
identify a single centre for
Neurosurgery in South Wales.



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What is the purpose of this leaflet?

This leaflet describes the findings from the Strategic Review of Neurosciences Services for Wales, and in particular it explains why changes are necessary to the way in which neurosurgery is provided in South Wales. It also explains how you can engage with the project, which will identify the best site for neurosurgery services in South Wales.

The development of proposals for neurosciences for South Wales is in parallel to the regional acute services proposals to implement 'Designed for Life' and will be the subject of a separate formal public consultation.

What are the Neurosciences?

The term Neurosciences is used to describe a wide range of services that provide assessment, investigation, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and support for people with disease and injuries affecting the nervous system. The following section provides a brief description of main neurosciences services:

Neurosurgery is a service that provides surgical management of patients with diseases and injuries that affect the brain and nervous system.

Neurology is a service that provides diagnosis and medical management of patients with diseases and injuries that affect the brain and nervous system.

Neurorehabilitation is a service that provides treatment and support to those patients who have reduced ability and function as a consequence of disease or injury that has affected their brain and/or nervous system.

Neurophysiology is a service that provides diagnosis of patient's conditions through the study of the electrical activity of the brain and nervous system.

Neuroradiology is a service that uses radiological techniques (e.g. X-rays, CAT scans, and Angiography scans) to diagnose and treat patients with disease and injuries affecting the brain and nervous system.

Neuropathology is a specialised branch of pathology which concentrates on the diagnosis of diseases of the nervous system.

How are neurosurgery services currently provided?

Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust and Swansea NHS Trust currently provide neurosurgery services for South Wales. The two services are amongst the smallest in the United Kingdom, and provide a similar range of services. They are based on two sites less than 50 miles apart on the M4, and staffed by separate medical and nursing teams with independent management structures.

In addition to neurosurgery, both centres also have neurology, neurorehabilitation, and neurophysiology and neuroradiology services; however, the only neuropathology service in Wales is currently based at Cardiff.

What are the key findings from the review?

The review project board and working groups had a wide membership, which included clinicians, service user representatives and management representatives from both Trusts

The review made a series of recommendations about the way that neurosciences services are organised and planned. One of the key findings was that the current organisation of neurosurgery services in South Wales is not clinically sustainable and is inefficient.

The review recommended that neurosurgery services should be based a single site, whilst neurology and neurorehabilitation services should remain on both of the existing sites in South Wales.

Why do neurosurgery services need to change?

There has been a long-standing acknowledgement by the staff in both centres, that South Wales can only sustain a single neurosurgery centre. The recommendation to move neurosurgery on to a single site has been supported by the results of an option appraisal exercise, which concluded that the best way to provide neurosurgery was to centralise the service onto one of the existing sites.

Each centre serves a relatively small population of between 0.8 million to 1.4 million, which means that there are not enough patients to maintain or develop clinical skills for some of the less common highly specialised operations. The current arrangement of neurosurgery services is also inefficient, with a duplication of clinical services and management structures across two sites.

The recent review of neurosciences services in Scotland, has also reached a similar conclusion, recommending a move from the existing model of four neurosurgical services in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, towards providing all neurosurgical interventions onto a single site for the whole of Scotland.

A recent review of training by the professional body responsible for consultant neurosurgeon training also criticised the ability of the South Wales service to train across the two split sites. If the current arrangement of services continues, it is highly likely that training will be withdrawn from South Wales within the next five years. The loss of training will pose a significant risk to the future of the service, as it will prove difficult to provide the service without trainees.

How will neurosurgery services change?

Under the proposed re-configuration, both of the existing units will become Regional Neurology Centres and will provide the following services for their local areas:

- outpatient neurosurgery clinics,
- inpatient and outpatient neurology,
- neurorehabilitation,
- neuroradiology,
- and neurophysiology.

One of these Centres will also host the unified neurosurgery service which will serve the whole of the South Wales. This centre will be designated as the South Wales Neurosciences Centre, and in addition to the services identified above will provide the following services for the whole of South Wales:

- inpatient neurosurgery,
- interventional neuroradiology
- and neuropathology.

How will HCW identify the best site for the South Wales Neurosciences Centre?

HCW has commissioned a project to identify the best site to host the reconfigured service. The project will look at:

- the ability of each site to provide the service,
- the effect of moving neurosurgery services on other related services
- the effect of moving neurosurgery services on the academic institutions
- the effect of reconfiguring services on travelling times for patients.

The project will produce a report identifying the recommended site for the South Wales Neurosciences Centre, which will be taken to the June meeting of the National Commissioning Advisory Board (NCAB). Following the NCAB meeting, the recommendations of the Neurosciences Review will go out to formal public consultation.

How can I participate?

As a member of the public you are a stakeholder in the neurosciences services, and we would be grateful for your views, which will inform the process to identify the recommended site for the South Wales Neurosciences Centre. In particular we would like your response to the following 2 questions:

1. What issues would you like to be considered in identifying the most suitable site?

2. What issues would you like to be considered in developing the new service?

Please forward written responses to:

Mrs Catherine Dew
Assistant Commissioner
Health Commission Wales
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly
CF83 3ED

Alternatively, you can complete the form electronically at www.wales.gov.uk/healthcommission and return to hcwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet and completing this feedback form.
