



23.07.19

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales,  
Cardiff Bay.  
SeneddHealth@ assembly.wales

Response to Consultation on Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Bill: a new people's voice body

Hengoed Crafters are a group of mainly middle-aged and older women who between us have considerable experience of seeking and receiving health care from the NHS and who often discuss health matters at our weekly meetings.

We are aware that the Welsh Assembly intends to replace Community Health Councils with a new Citizen's Voice body which will have a remit covering both health and social care.

We agree with this but there are two aspects of the proposed scheme that need strengthening.

It is very important that the volunteer members of the new body have a right to carry out both unannounced and announced access to health and social care settings to gain the views of patients while they are receiving treatment. Patients are often reluctant to voice their concerns to health and social care employees but will usually willingly talk to volunteers independent of the statutory services when they know that their comments will be anonymous. CHC volunteers (who are committed to improving the health service) can react very quickly to concerns raised by patients, family members and visitors. They have been effective in a constructive way of instigating changes and drawing attention to bad practice. It would be a great pity for us all if this right to access were not included in the new bill. These visits should not be confused with those undertaken by Health Inspectorate Wales which are infrequent and have a different focus.

We are pleased that the Bill envisages that health and social care organisations must "have regard" to representations made by the new body on behalf of the public but feel that this

• should be strengthened so that they are “required” to respond. This is so that people can be reassured that their views have been heard.

We hope the committee will take these comments into consideration and amend the bill accordingly.

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Chair, Hengoed Crafters

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On behalf of our group