



Annual Review 2003 / 2004

enhancing healthcare,  
empowering Wales

Galw **IECHYD** Cymru

**NHS** Direct **Wales**

"NHS Direct will bring major advantages  
to the people of Wales.

It will provide a valuable 24 hour service  
offering useful advice on a range of health matters".

*Health and Social Services Secretary, Jane Hutt*

Wales NHS Press Release, June 12th 2000

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# Welcome

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Annual Review of NHS Direct Wales, which Swansea Trust is proud to host.

The Review highlights the many achievements of NHS Direct Wales and the new challenges it has faced each year, In 2003/04 the pace of change was even greater as NHS Direct Wales prepared for an increased role in supporting the revised GP Out of Hours arrangements.

The strategic direction for NHS Direct Wales has recently been clarified by the Welsh Assembly Government in being the first point of contact for patients requiring non-emergency care and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the Assembly through the newly established Commissioning Team to improve the service we provide to people throughout Wales.



**Jane Perrin** Chief Executive, Swansea NHS Trust

Since its inception in 2000, NHS Direct Wales has exceeded all projected expectations. We provide people in Wales with 24-hour access to confidential bilingual health advice and information, receiving over 30,000 calls every month. The service we provide is complementary to existing healthcare avenues and a symbol of the wider modernisation of the NHS.

At the heart of our organisation is a commitment to providing a high quality service accessible to all sectors of the population. These values remain unchanged although our approach is continually evolving as we respond to the health needs of a bilingual nation.

The service has grown dramatically in terms of both size and scope and we remain committed to developing new partnerships throughout Wales. We work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and Health Commission Wales as well as local level groups and voluntary organisations.

I hope that this first Annual Review will provide you with a succinct overview of the many innovative projects developed at NHS Direct Wales during 03/04. As we enter our fifth year of operation, we look forward to continued expansion and increased demand for our core service as well as strengthening our partnership working and developing new initiatives.



**Sara Jones** Director, NHS Direct Wales

NHS Direct will bring major advantages to the people of Wales.  
It will provide a valuable 24 hour service offering useful advice on a range on health matter.



## Our Service

NHS Direct Wales provides a 24-hour bilingual telephone service giving people throughout Wales access to health advice and information. Our guiding principle is to provide the population of Wales with advice and information about health, illness and the NHS, so that everyone is better able to care for themselves and their family.

In February 1999 the National Assembly for Wales, via the Specialist Health Services Commission for Wales, commissioned NHS Direct Wales as a bilingual service for the people of Wales. NHS Direct Wales was developed as a new system of integrated care, which aims to provide more accessible, and higher quality, services for patients.

NHS Direct Wales enables people to make decisions about their own or their family's health by providing advice and evidence-based information. It also acts as a 24-hour signpost, directing people to the most appropriate level of care. Since the launch of the first site in Swansea in June 2000, the service has opened two further sites in Bangor and Pontypool and covers the whole of Wales, a population of nearly 3 million.

NHS Direct Wales now handles around 30,000 calls each month. In addition to the bilingual telephone helpline we have continued to develop a range of multi-channel services including our website, with information available in 30 languages, and a Minicom/ Textphone service for the hearing impaired. A translation and interpretation service is available at no cost to the caller, enabling access to the service in over 120 languages.

NHS Direct Wales offers unparalleled public access to health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

I was nervous and worried  
when I first called...  
but I was soon reassured by the  
friendly voice down the phone  
and I was able to get the advice I needed.



## The Caller's Journey

When a caller phones NHS Direct Wales a trained Call Handler will answer and establish the caller's personal details and their reason for calling.

The Call Handler may be able to respond directly to the caller's enquiry. For example, if a telephone number or the location details of a local pharmacy are required, the call handler can provide this information.

Calls are prioritised on clinical need - urgent calls are put through directly, whilst non-urgent calls may receive a call back within an agreed timeframe. Callers are channeled to the most appropriate part of our service; this could be a Nurse, Dental Health Adviser or Health Information Adviser, depending on the query.

### **Nurse Adviser**

All Nurse Advisers in NHS Direct Wales have at least 3 years of nursing experience. Drawing on their diverse expertise, our nurses are able to respond to a wide range of healthcare enquiries and provide the caller with a high level of support.

The Nurse Adviser will assess the caller's needs, assisted by a decision support system. Based on the information provided by the caller, the nurse will provide appropriate advice for

each situation, be it self care, a visit to a pharmacy, GP practice or A&E department or, in certain circumstances, an ambulance can be called on the caller's behalf.

### **Dental Health Adviser**

Dental queries may be put through to a Dental Health Adviser who can offer an assessment, give advice on pain relief as well as oral hygiene and provide information on emergency dental sessions, local access centres and dental practices accepting new patients.

### **Health Information Adviser**

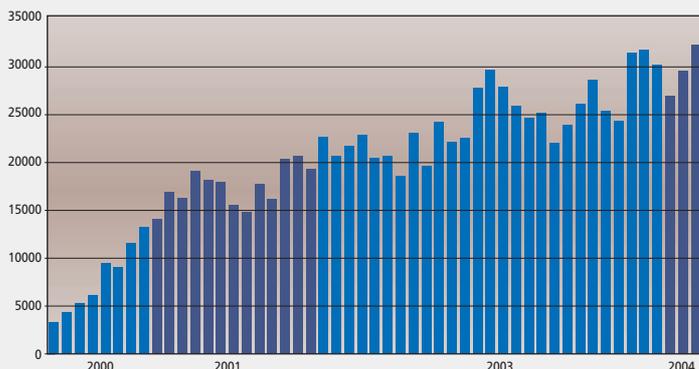
Health Information Advisers answer a variety of enquires on a range of health topics from vaccinations, details of self help groups and voluntary agencies to complex enquiries about success rates of treatments, diagnostic procedures and in-depth information on common or rare diagnosed conditions.

For patients' safety and quality of service, all calls are recorded. Calls may be used for training purposes to ensure the highest quality is maintained. Calls are charged at the same rate as a local call.

# Call Volume Statistics

Throughout 2003/04 NHS Direct Wales has maintained the steady, progressive increase in call volume since the organisation went live in June 2000.

Volume of NHS Direct Wales calls from "Go Live" to March 2004



The overall annual call volume for calls made to NHS Direct Wales rose by 51,089 to 311,407 in 2003/04. This culminated in our busiest month to date, March '04, when 31,069 calls were offered to the service. As of 31st March 04, NHS Direct Wales had received 880,167 calls.

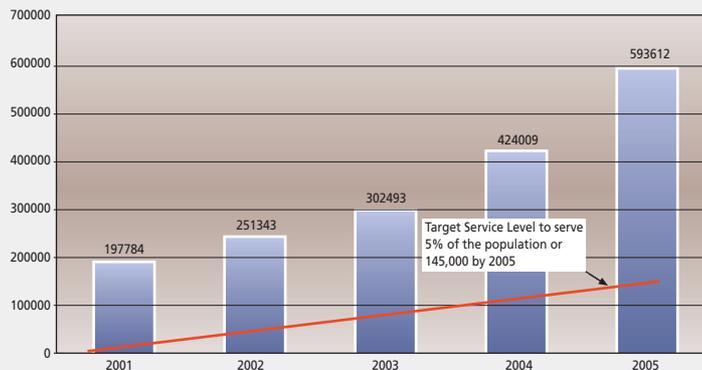
These call volumes include not only those to our core 0845 46 47 service, but also the additional services taken on such as GP Out of Hours (OOHs), Dental Information, Category C and A&E calls. All of these additional services have experienced significant growth in the patterns of usage.

This continued growth far exceeds the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government at our inception.

The target was to achieve provision of service to 145,000 callers, 5% of the population, by 2005.

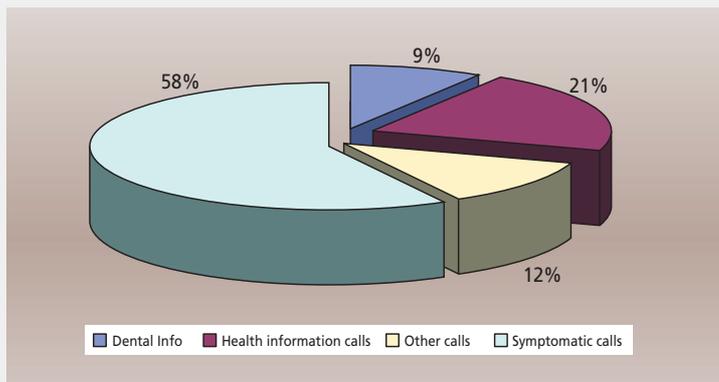
Current predictions, built on actual performance, put NHS Direct Wales' call volume for 2005 at five times that of the original target.

Actual / Predicted Calls 2001 - 2005



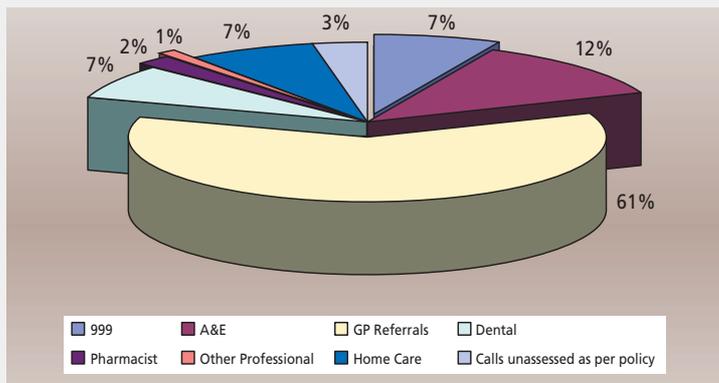
# Call Volume Statistics

Type of Calls Received April 2003 - March 2004



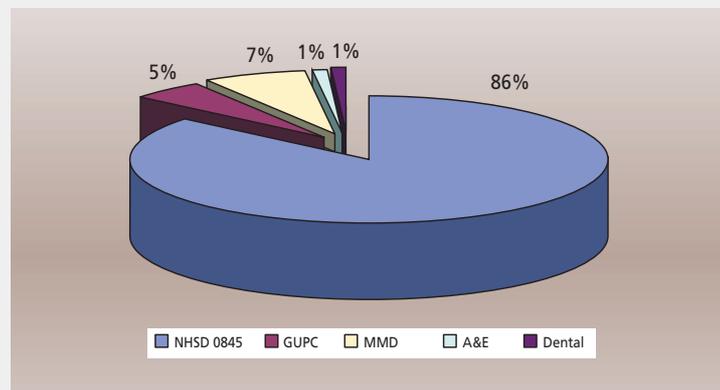
The 0845 46 47 number is our core service, providing health advice and information to the people of Wales. We are developing all the time to take on extra services such as GP OOHs, which made up 12% of our calls in 03/04; A&E calls were 1%, whilst out-of-hour dental help lines make up another 1% of our call volume.

NHS Direct Wales Outcome of Calls April 2003 - March 2004



Calls to the service are varied and wide-ranging. 58% of calls that came in to the service in 03/04 were symptomatic, requiring nurse triage and the relevant disposition. 21% of calls were Health Information ranging from queries on GP registration to healthy eating advice while 9% of calls required dental information or advice.

Source of Calls received by NHS Direct Wales April 2003 - March 2004



The top five symptoms from April 03 to March 04 were abdominal pain, rash, toothache, fever and vomiting. 61% of callers were referred for care to their GP's with 36% recommended an appointment within 4 hours, 11% recommended within 12 hours and 14% over 12 hours. 7% of callers were given self-care advice while 2% were redirected to a pharmacist.

In stressful situations  
such as when in great pain or ill,  
many people feel more comfortable  
and confident speaking Welsh with  
professional health care workers.

*University of Wales, Bangor.*



## A Bilingual Service

2003/04 has been a year of development and innovation within NHS Direct Wales as access to, and improvement of, Welsh Language facilities took place both internally and externally.

Our Welsh-speaking staff provide callers with the opportunity to access a bilingual service day and night and we strive to use Welsh language/bilingual resources wherever possible. In the event of Welsh speaking staff being unavailable to take a Welsh language call, the caller is offered a Welsh consultation via the Language Line translation service. We regularly monitor our bilingual staffing levels to see how recruitment and retention could be improved to sustain an increasing demand for the service.

As part of our commitment to the bilingual agenda, the Welsh Language steering group meets regularly to discuss the progress and development of Welsh language initiatives.

### **Welsh@work**

To raise awareness of Welsh in the workplace and to give staff the opportunity to learn and improve their skills we have introduced an exciting new initiative - a Welsh@work section on our intranet site. This online tool, signposting both internal and external resources, is an integral part of our commitment to supporting staff in developing their Welsh Language Skills.

### **Awards**

We put forward nominations for the 'Welsh Language in Healthcare Awards' and were proud that our commitment to the Welsh language had been recognised when we were short listed in two categories - Strongest Staff Commitment to Learning, and Overall Achievement.

When I leave home after my shift  
I know I've managed to help people.  
My day might have been busy  
but it's always fulfilling.



## Our Staff

NHS Direct Wales has always aimed to be an Employer of Choice. The organisation offers specifically tailored induction programmes, dedicated training time, and opportunities for staff to influence and lead change. The growth and development of our service is underpinned by the dedication and commitment of staff at all levels.

In April 2003 NHS Direct Wales, in partnership with Swansea NHS Trust, achieved the silver award in the Corporate Health Standard, a unique mark of quality for workplace health promotion awarded by the Welsh Assembly Government and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive, the CBI and the TUC in Wales.

The year 03/04 has seen the Human Resources Department take on a number of new challenges, ensuring that our recruitment policy fully complies with the Welsh Language Act and successfully recruiting for all teams across the organisation. As we work through the complexities of Agenda For Change, we endeavor to inform all staff about the modernisation agenda and the changes occurring in the health service across Wales.

With the strengthening of the Human Resources Department, there will be increased support for staff development and training over the coming year, and the introduction of a formal staff committee will enhance the channels of communication for all staff.

We aim to develop staff appropriately in line with personal objectives and organisational needs. This will require the development of teams and structures in order to ensure NHS Direct Wales meets its strategic objectives. As we work towards these goals, we aim to achieve external recognition in the form of "audits" such as Investors In People.

It was a bank holiday  
and the family were visiting....  
I didn't want to make a fuss  
but I knew that something wasn't right.  
After speaking to a nurse,  
I knew I had to go to the hospital.



## Nursing Team Developments

The establishment of NHS Direct Wales in 2000 heralded the beginning of a national nurse-led service for Wales designed to provide confidential and expert clinical advice and information to the general public.

The drive to realise the potential of all nurses working in the organisation at the inception of this service was explicit, and the key themes and priorities for nursing as described in the National Nursing Strategy Realising the Potential (2000) remain at the heart of nursing practice at NHS Direct Wales in 2004.

Experienced nursing staff continue to be recruited from a diverse range of clinical backgrounds and specialities. All staff undertake a 6-week induction and role preparation programme prior to commencement of clinical practice. This programme ensures that nurses are well prepared to undertake complex assessments of health needs over the telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week whatever the presenting problem of the caller.

Continuous professional development is actively encouraged through the Individual Performance Review and the production of Professional Development plans.

This is supported through an "in-house" education and training programme, secondment opportunities and financial support and access to study leave. A comprehensive programme for clinical auditing is in place and new auditing tools for clinical practice have been developed.

This year, nurse advisors have again received support for first and second level nursing degree courses, accredited courses in telephone triage, clinical supervision and many other areas.

The development of nursing practice at NHS Direct Wales has been enhanced by the introduction of two new specialist roles for nurses this year: Senior Nurse for Mental Health and Senior Nurse for Children's Services. These roles have augmented and supported best clinical practice, training and supervision and partnership working with other Health and Social Care professionals.

In conjunction with these developments the structure of the nursing team is currently under review in order to examine opportunities for further development of nursing roles and practice for the future.

I was running late  
and needed to pick up my tablets.  
NHS Direct Wales gave me details  
of my local late night chemist



## Health Information Team Developments

The role of the Health Information Team within NHS Direct Wales is to enable callers to make informed decisions about their healthcare and increase their knowledge about services available. The team play an essential part in ensuring that quality, evidenced-based information is delivered to the public and health professionals across Wales.

Staff are trained to understand the importance of a well-delivered, responsive health information service. This year, the introduction and development of a work based competency framework has been incorporated into the operational performance of the Health Information Team. These competencies enable advisers to provide a consistent and safe information service.

Health Information training enables Advisers to become 'information professionals' who are expert in the use of information and medical resources. To enhance these skills a 'Health Information Professional Portfolio' has been introduced. These portfolios carry evidence of continuous

learning and professional development. In support of their on-going training, many staff have undertaken NVQ's pertinent to their field and undergraduate courses in evidence-based research.

There is an extensive range of information available. It includes all NHS services in Wales such as GP's, Dentists and Pharmacists with specific information on emergency availability, disabled access and languages offered. To complement the information provided on diagnosed conditions, the team have access to a unique database of national and local self-help and support groups.

The introduction of a team of Health Information Administrators, under the management of a Resource Officer, has further strengthened our service. The team is responsible for collating and updating information on NHS services and training all staff groups in the use of these searchable databases.

As an on-call dentist I'm very impressed with the scope of dental provision.

Caller's needs are always ascertained before they are referred, an excellent benefit for all concerned.



## Dental Team Developments

### Dental Calls

The number of dental calls NHS Direct Wales receives has grown dramatically since the service went live in June 2000. As the type of calls have become more complex due to limited availability of dental services, NHS Direct Wales has developed to meet the challenges that this increased demand has created.

Along with providing specific information on registration criteria, Dental Access Centres and Community Dental service information, we also liaise closely with Dental Practices, Business Service Centres and Local Health Boards (LHBs) to ensure we have correct information on dental services and dental rotas within Wales.

We are currently working in collaboration with an emergency dental clinic in Carmarthen to coordinate the booking of emergency dental slots whilst also fronting out-of-hour dental help lines for three LHBs.

### Dental Health Advisers

NHS Direct Wales has responded to dental demand by employing a team of dental nurses and developing a framework for them to work within to support the service. Along with providing support to colleagues dealing with dental calls, the Dental Health Advisers assess caller's symptoms, respond to basic toothache problems, identify those callers requiring emergency treatment and provide advice regarding levels of care to be undertaken by the caller whilst awaiting dental treatment. The Dental Health Advisers also play a key role in providing oral health and hygiene promotion to callers.

The introduction of this new skill set into the team has proved very successful and we are looking to expand the team both in numbers and scope.

### Dental on the web

To widen access to dental information our searchable dental database is available to both the public and professionals on our website at [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk). In the future additional dental health information will be made available through our website to complement our 0845 4647 service.

It's reassuring to know  
that someone is always there,  
just at the end of the phone,  
when I'm anxious or concerned.



## Service Developments

### **GP Out-of-Hours (OOH) Services**

NHS Direct Wales has continued to provide call handling and nurse triage to callers accessing Gwent Urgent Primary Care and Meddygon Menai Doctors OOH services. Not only have these two OOH pilots been successful in delivering a high quality service they have directly influenced the way that NHS Direct Wales will provide OOH services in the future.

### **A & E Integrations**

In December 03 NHS Direct Wales expanded its successful A&E integration programme to incorporate Singleton A&E Department. This integration means that callers to the department, seeking advice on new clinical conditions are transferred to NHS Direct Wales where they receive nurse triage and advice.

Following the positive impact of this integration, and the successful links with Morriston and The Royal Gwent A&E departments, NHS Direct Wales is keen to integrate with other A&E Departments in the future.

### **The Samaritans**

September 03 saw the launch of a pilot scheme between NHS Direct Wales and the Samaritans. This scheme enables NHS Direct Wales to refer appropriate callers (only with their permission) to a Samaritans branch where volunteers call the individual back at an agreed time and offer emotional support through the Samaritans follow-up scheme.

This referral is in addition to triage outcomes, the provision of Health Information, and/or details of help lines and support groups. This link with the Samaritans is seen as an additional source of help and support for our callers.

### **Category C**

The "Category C" project is a collaborative study between Sheffield and Swansea Universities and the Welsh Ambulance Services. The aim of the study is to assess if the transfer of 'Cat C' (low priority 999 calls) to NHS Direct Wales is clinically safe and appropriate. Cost implications, effectiveness and the impact on partner organisations will be analysed as part of the study. The study is due to end February 05.

NHS Direct Wales suits me -  
I'm not as embarrassed  
asking questions over the phone  
as I would be face to face.



## Pillars of Clinical Governance

Clinical Governance is defined as a 'framework through which NHS organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in healthcare will flourish' (DoH 1997). Clinical Governance is about the patients and their carers receiving the right care at the right time by the right person in a safe environment.

NHS Direct Wales has developed a Clinical Governance strategy and a 3 year Clinical Governance Development Plan outlining the main areas for action, identified by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) report. The Clinical Governance Committee drives forward the programmes attached to the seven pillars of Clinical Governance.

**Patient Experience** We are strongly dedicated to the caller's experience. In order to establish and maintain a patient focused service we endeavour to ensure representation from patient advocates at key committees such as the Social Access group.

**Risk Management** We have developed proactive risk management activities as well as reactive incident reporting. The Risk Management and Health and Safety Committee co-ordinates all related work across the organisation.

**Clinical Audit** We manage audit in a proactive manner, recognising its importance as a quality improvement tool. Both clinical and non-clinical audits are undertaken in order to

benchmark and assess areas of the service against local and nationally set standards.

**Staff Management** We have a flexible working policy with a dynamic recruitment and retention strategy. We evaluate success through an annual staff survey, the results of which are used to change policy and procedures.

**Education & Training** We have developed training programmes to ensure all disciplines have access to induction programmes and downtime training days to support both staff and service delivery.

**Clinical Effectiveness** We have recently established a Research and Development Focus Group; early objectives include raising awareness of research processes/ mechanisms and developing critical evaluation skills.

**Communication and Information** We communicate effectively with staff through information cascade including newsletters and forums, and by Intranet and Internet updates.

When I took up my role on the phones  
I was worried I might not cope.  
But I receive on-going training  
and daily support.  
I feel confident and self-assured.



## Training & Development

The roles of the training team within NHS Direct Wales are to support the organisation in meeting service objectives, to progress the ongoing development of staff, and to meet the mandatory and statutory training requirements of all disciplines.

To provide a consistent and standardised framework, and to ensure all call-talking staff are equipped with the skills required to perform their role, induction programmes for Nurses, Call Handlers and the Health Information team have been changed to a modular design. The team are exploring the introduction of competency based training programmes. In the future these will be linked to the Knowledge and Skills Framework identified through Agenda for Change.

The training team have instigated annual downtime training programmes for all frontline staff. These downtime days support the delivery of mandatory/statutory training plus any Clinical Assessment System updates and/or refresher training. All other staff are encouraged to attend appropriate non-clinical sessions. As demand grows, the team is exploring additional avenues to support the training of larger groups.

Clinical Resource Groups have been set up, each relating to one of the National Service Frameworks (NSF's). Link Nurses have been appointed for all the groups and membership is open to all frontline staff. The primary focus of the groups is to examine the NSF's for England and Wales and National Institute of Clinical Excellence (N.I.C.E) guidelines and to ensure that the advice and information provided to callers is consistent with these standards.

I had never used the service...  
until I had kids!  
Now I keep the number  
by my phone,  
ready whenever we need it.



## CHI Review

The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) undertook its first Clinical Governance review of NHS Direct Wales in April 03. The report, published in December 03, provided a platform on which to develop the NHS Direct Wales 3 year Clinical Governance Development Plan.

CHI identified that NHS Direct Wales had developed a number of initial Clinical Governance arrangements that could be used as the basis for further development.

Progress had been made in providing information to the public and in developing initiatives to improve public access to the service, including access for people for whom English or Welsh is not their first language or those who have sensory impairments, via the use of Language Line and the minicom service.

The review highlighted that NHS Direct Wales staff feel supported and valued. CHI found a good working environment with flexible working arrangements which, in turn, resulted in staff who were enthusiastic, caring and committed to the service. Staff valued the training and

development opportunities provided through a range of induction programmes, in-house sessions and access to external training.

The review also reported that NHS Direct Wales has successfully forged links with related organisations such as the Drug Information Service, Poisons Unit and Child Protection services.

CHI identified the key areas to be strengthened which include the development of the Clinical Governance strategy and implementation plan, the strengthening of our relationship with the host trust, initiatives to ensure Welsh speaking staff are available at all times and further integration with the wider health community. We are progressing within all of these areas and work is currently on-going with Swansea NHS Trust, the regional office, the Welsh Language Board and numerous stakeholders.

For a full copy of this report go to [www.chi.nhs.uk](http://www.chi.nhs.uk)

Nothing I could do would calm her down  
and I was at my wits end.  
I spoke to NHS Direct Wales  
and was given contact details  
for my local support groups.



## Child Protection

NHS Direct Wales was involved in the Self-Assessment Audit of Arrangements for Child Protection in Wales undertaken by CHI. The first of its kind in Wales, the audit asked boards and senior staff from all NHS organisations in Wales to complete an assessment of their practices for protecting children and young people.

A number of areas of notable practice were identified from the current child protection procedures within NHS Direct Wales. These include the arrangements for monitoring, which are compliant with child protection standards, and having rigorous frameworks in place to ensure accurate record keeping. Support and resources are available for child protection activities, including protected time and staff counselling while training is in place to deal with child protection issues.

NHS Direct Wales has further developed its child protection practices and procedures since this audit was undertaken. These have included the appointment of a lead nurse for Child Protection, commencement of the NSPCC Child Protection Training Programme for all employees, a review of Child Protection policy and the development of stronger links with stakeholders and health and social care partners across Wales in order to establish child focussed PPI strategies.

I needed advice  
when I was away from home.  
I phoned NHS Direct Wales  
halfway up a mountain  
and they talked me through  
exactly what I needed to do.



## Audit & Quality

Since its inception, NHS Direct Wales has managed audit in a proactive manner, recognising its importance as an effective quality improvement tool. Both clinical and non-clinical audits are undertaken in order to benchmark and assess areas of the service against locally and nationally set standards.

Audits are carried out to ensure that all systems work effectively and that standards are met. These audits initiate change, with recommendations for change in practice and action plans being developed in response to findings.

Within the last two years an internal Clinical Audit Team has been developed with protected time for audit practice. This multidisciplinary team is responsible for coordinating, facilitating and supporting clinical audits undertaken in the call center environment. Audits carried out in the past year include Medicine Related Calls audit, GP Out Of Hours audit and Race and Ethnicity audit. We have also conducted a number of joint audits with other health and social care providers.

NHS Direct Wales recognises that the key to meaningful audit is to ensure that findings are used to make

improvements and changes in practice, that they are disseminated widely across all disciplines and that all teams are involved at all levels.

### **Mystery Shopper**

A leading Market Research company makes 10 calls per month (4 Clinical Calls and 6 Health Information Calls) to NHS Direct Wales to independently measure performance and to ensure consistency across the 0845 46 47 service. Detailed feedback on these calls is provided, each call is reviewed and any issues identified are addressed. Acknowledgment of good practice is fed back to staff involved. These results are benchmarked against those from NHS Direct (England).

### **Caller Experience Survey**

We undertake a monthly Caller Experience Survey. Eligible callers who have agreed to participate in the survey are randomly selected and contacted to elicit their views of our service. The findings from this telephone survey are used to inform audit, education and training programmes and risk management activities, as well as ensuring that future service developments are patient based.

I'm glad I called,  
speaking to a nurse  
gave me peace of mind



## Audit Commission Review

The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned a review of NHS Direct Wales during January 2004. The purpose of the review was to assess certain key aspects of NHS Direct Wales, to inform the debate on policy and future funding, and to identify the scope for NHS Direct Wales to deliver an all-Wales out of hours service for Local Health Boards in the future.

The report concluded that the organisation has successfully implemented a bilingual nurse led telephone service and has responded to increased demand. The governance and financial management arrangements are robust and the service is professionally managed.

The report also recommended that further work is required in a number of key areas:

- Benchmarking exercises that compare NHS Direct Wales with equivalent services in England and Scotland in terms of performance, skill mix and management costs;
- Benchmarking exercises that compare cost and performance of NHS Direct Wales with other models of out of hours services currently being operated in Wales;
- Option appraisals to more closely integrate NHS Direct Wales into the mainstream NHS, including a review of the impact NHS Direct Wales has on workload elsewhere in the NHS;
- The potential to develop the current services that NHS Direct Wales provides so that they support the modernisation agenda in Wales.

In summary the report was very positive and has assisted the organisation in developing its plans for the future.

I'd just moved to Wales  
and needed to register with a local GP.  
It was so easy to call 0845 4647  
to get the information I needed.



## Risk Management

NHS Direct Wales has developed proactive risk management activities along with reactive incident reporting. Risk Management and risk assessment training are an integral component of all employees' induction whilst a refresher training programme updates staff annually on health and safety issues, adverse incidents and feedback and complaint management training.

Risk assessments are undertaken for each department and work area within the organisation and as part of any new project or audits.

NHS Direct Wales is a learning organisation that aims to reduce problems reoccurring through relevant systems of education. Many adverse incidents that occur are related to 'near misses' rather than actual harm. Frameworks are put in place to reduce the likelihood of the 'near miss' becoming a future incident resulting in potential harm. A review of all actual incidents is undertaken resulting in an accompanying action plan.

The Risk Management and Health and Safety Committee co-ordinates all risk management and health and safety

issues across the organisation. This feeds into the Swansea Trust Risk Management, Health and Safety and Complaints and Litigation committees.

### Complaints Procedure

NHS Direct Wales encourages complaints, feedback and accolades about the service and we consider these to be a vital learning and quality improvement tool.

We maintain a database of all oral and written complaints, accolades and feedback received, from which we are able to ascertain any trends or themes arising and act on these accordingly. NHS Direct Wales encourages service feedback from stakeholders and health professionals; the development of health professional feedback forms, posted to a number of organisations across Wales, has improved our ability to do this.

NHS Direct Wales complaints policy has been revised in line with revised Welsh Assembly Government complaint guidelines and will be further developed before the end of this year to ensure a risk-scoring matrix is attached to all documentation.

I don't like to bother my family...  
but sometimes I'm worried  
and in the dark, aches and pains  
seem much more frightening.



## Social Inclusion

NHS Direct Wales is committed to providing equitable access to callers from diverse backgrounds or from sections of the population who, historically, choose to access services in a haphazard or impulsive fashion. Our Social Access Group works with partnership organisations across Wales, such as Asylum Seeker Health Visitors, Commission for Race Equality, Race Equality councils, RNID, and RNIB, to increase and enable access to the service from a wide range of potentially excluded groups.

Caller can access us in over 120 languages through a confidential translation service and information in 28 different languages is available on our website. Tynetalk or Minicom systems are available for the hearing-impaired and information can be supplied in Braille or on audiotape. Posters and information cards about the service have been developed in 6 other languages - Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic and Cantonese.

Our website supports the 0845 service while new developments such as The Room targets the 14-24 age group. We host the Keep Well This Winter website, targeted at the over 65's, pertinent to this group. All our websites have a feedback section used to further develop and improve the sites.

### **Awareness Events**

We are proactive in raising awareness of the service within specific groups. In 03/04 we attended county shows, community events and conferences in order to target different sectors of the population.

### **Campaigns**

In Spring 04 NHS Direct Wales supported BBC Wales with their Big Fat Problem Campaign, raising awareness about the issues of obesity. The public were encouraged to contact NHS Direct Wales for further information including Information Packs, and staff attended roadshows across Wales to provide the public with the opportunity to talk to Nurse and Health Information Advisers about healthy eating and weight related health issues.

The ability to access information  
and advice from a website  
could help young people  
who may be reluctant  
to use the more conventional services.

Jane Hutt, Minister for Health & Social Services



## Telephony & Information Technology

### Operating as a Virtual Call Centre

2003/04 saw NHS Direct Wales achieving greater flexibility and functionality in Contact Centre Technology by introducing additional resilience and new technological features to the service. This allows for a more flexible and robust working platform.

The increased infrastructure provides flexibility to create a Virtual Call Centre, ensuring the service is able to be more efficient and effective in delivering Telephone based Health Information and Advice. Increased staff utilisation has been achieved by the investment whilst providing for potential future expansion of the NHS Direct Wales service.

Current technology allows delivery of calls to the most appropriate person, on each occasion, thereby giving streamlined access to health information and advice as well as increasing the overall productivity of the service.

### **[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)**

Between April 03 and March 04, there were 93,518 visitors to the bilingual NHS Direct Wales website. This was an increase on the previous year, with each month's visitor count rising steadily.

The site was re-designed over the last year. The new developments have improved functionality for visually impaired people as well as enabling us to automatically update content through internal 'web authors'. The content management system gives us greater opportunity to upload information on health alerts as and when they happen. We will continue to develop the Internet as a feedback and information medium, enhancing the overall service to public and NHS professionals alike.

### The Room

This year saw an exciting new development with the launch of The Room website. This bilingual site is aimed at 14-24 years olds and is full of advice and information relevant to this target audience. Using directed vocabulary, the site contains information on subjects as diverse as drink spiking and STD's, to accident prevention and self-harm.

### **[www.kwtw.org.uk](http://www.kwtw.org.uk)**

NHS Direct Wales hosts the Keep Well This Winter campaign website. This is a joint undertaking by the Welsh Assembly Government and Age Concern Cymru. Developed by NHS Direct Wales, the bilingual site provides advice, information and support to those aged 65 and over to enable them to keep well, warm and safe during winter.

Looking after a toddler  
is a 24-hour job.  
It's good to know that I can call  
NHS Direct Wales anytime.



## Future Challenges

NHS Direct Wales has identified a number of key priorities to take the service forward into 2004/05 and beyond. Our main objective is to ensure the continued success of the 0845 46 47 service. Whilst awareness of NHS Direct Wales has been growing steadily, we are working towards full recognition of the service across Wales.

### **Out of Hours Integration: The future**

With changes in the GMS Contract allowing GPs to transfer responsibility for OOH care to LHBs. LHBs across Wales invited expressions of interest from potential OOH service providers. As a result of this process NHS Direct Wales will be providing a Call handling and triage service for Swansea LHB area (in partnership with the Swansea OOH Service GP provider) and Gwynedd and Anglesey LHBs from the 1st October 04. The Gwynedd & Anglesey OOH service will absorb the area previously covered by the highly successful partnership with Meddygon Menai Doctors GP Co-op. NHS Direct Wales will be producing a report detailing Out of Hours arrangements in the forthcoming year.

It is envisaged that in the future NHS Direct Wales will work with more LHBs to provide OOH call handling and triage.

### **Dental Services**

The strategy document 'Routes to Reform' which outlines primary dental care in Wales, describes NHS Direct Wales as being 'central to the future coordination of access to emergency dental treatment in Wales'. The service currently offers advice about treatment and NHS GDP's currently accepting to callers to two dental help lines; the challenge is to offer this dental provision across Wales.

Health advice,  
information and support,  
24 hours a day, everyday



## Future Challenges

### Emergency Care

NHS Direct Wales has the potential to contribute more widely to the delivery of emergency care in particular through dealing with low priority ambulance calls. In response to the on going Category C project, a range of limited piloting and development work in this area will be pursued over the next 3 years.

Over the next year, NHS Direct Wales will contribute to the Welsh Emergency Care Collaborative programme, a multi-organisational national programme that aims to improve emergency care access for patients in Wales. This will provide the opportunity for NHS Direct Wales to strengthen and expand existing A&E links and explore new ways of working together with all Acute Trusts, LHB's, the Ambulance service, Social Services and Primary Care.

NHS Direct Wales already operates partnerships with the A&E departments at Morriston, Royal Gwent and Singleton Hospitals; plans are in place to roll this out to all A&E departments over the next 18 months.

### Pharmacy Services

There is considerable potential for a section of callers to NHS Direct Wales to be referred to a community pharmacist for further advice. Work is ongoing to identify these callers, to build this referral route into existing protocols and to engage pharmacists across Wales, via our Pharmacy Sub-Group.

NHS Direct Wales is engaged in discussion with numerous service providers, examining whether it might be possible to add value to existing models of service delivery.



## Financial Statement

NHS Direct Wales is currently hosted by Swansea NHS Trust and to that effect adhere to the policies and standards set by the Trust as a statutory body.

NHS Direct Wales had a ring fenced funding level in the financial year 2003/2004 of £9,030,106 which was for the provision of the core 0845 service. A small surplus was achieved after taking into account the funding adjustment highlighted in the next paragraph.

£1,000,000 had been set aside to cover costs associated with the development of a new call centre. As this project did not come to fruition the funding was returned to the commissioners (Health Commission Wales).

NHS Direct Wales has met all financial targets set for the financial year 2003/2004.



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Thank you to all who contributed to the production of this Annual Review.