

## A Healthier Wales: A Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care, September 2019

Tenovus Cancer Care is Wales' leading cancer charity. Our aims are simple. We want to help prevent, treat and find a cure for cancer.

We do this by offering support, advice and treatment to cancer patients and their loved ones. We also promote healthy lifestyles and fund cancer research to find new ways to prevent it, diagnose it, and treat it.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important consultation.

### General Comments

As members of the Wales Cancer Alliance we align ourselves with the consensus paper submitted in July 2019. The purpose of this response is to provide some brief, additional comments over and above those already made, and will focus on the 'digital' and 'workforce shape' themes.

### Digital

Although topics such as artificial intelligence are identified as elements of the digital vision, we believe that far greater prominence and substance needs to be attached to this.

With the serious capacity challenges facing the NHS workforce there will inevitably be a continuing gap in any strategy that does not place significant weight on the opportunities that artificial intelligence, big data and machine learning afford to increasing capacity. More specifically Tenovus Cancer Care would welcome more detail concerning how clinicians could be liberated from more routine, lower-value-addition diagnostic and screening processes through employment of artificial intelligence, informed by big data and machine learning to help improve triage processes. This would support the goal of "[redesigning] current roles and create new roles and ways of working as new technology emerges" twofold. This is by (1) removing the need for any workforce to interact with some tests, for example those that are assessed by AI against and do not meet a threshold criteria, such as FIT; and secondly (2) by growing the workforce that is able to add value in the diagnostic chain from the existing workforce, particularly allowing allied health professionals not currently commissioned to perform such tasks.

There are also privacy issues for public health and big data. Machine learning requires large amounts of data to allow its algorithms to learn. As a result an important consideration is concerns around privacy issues related to the personal data inputted into such systems and the extent to which they can or should be considered a public good going forward.

### Workforce Shape

Growing the size of the workforce is of course but one way of addressing capacity issues. It is vitally important that we recognise the immense wealth of experience among the soon-to and recently retired populations. Having true agile-working practices, allowing those nearing retirement age to rebalance their work-life balance and continue this past a conventional retirement age represents a significant resource that can help bridge the recruitment gap. More flexible, non-conventional arrangements such as allowing staff, should they so wish, to

maintain a non-committal ad-hoc relationship, subject to maintenance of relevant accreditations, could also be considered in the same vein.

Beyond this, it is important to recognise that recruiting staff to certain locations will remain an obstinate challenge, no matter the salary or benefits. To this end, Tenovus Cancer Care would like to see a greater emphasis placed on the ability for certain processes, such as diagnostic tests, admin and to an extent certain consultations taking place remotely by making full use of modern communication technologies. Where there is a reduced premium on work taking place during conventional working patterns, and distance technologies are feasible, there is little to restrict staff from being able to perform certain tasks in line with their own schedules, whatever time of day, or night that might be – thus increasing workforce capacity.