

Paper for Health Protection Advisory Group

Strengthening the National Health Protection Service for Wales – Governance and Assurance

Purpose

To consider and comment on the proposed governance and assurance arrangements for the proposed investment in the National Health Protection Service

INTRODUCTION

1. A paper on the proposed model to strengthen the National Health Protection Service was presented to EDT on 27th November 2018. It was noted that investments already made were positive first steps but the model developed required significant additional investment and the whole system approach to strengthening the National Health Protection Service required agreement with the health boards and other trusts. It was agreed that wider engagement with health boards and trusts should take place before proposals to the Minister were finalised.
2. The Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer hosted a workshop on 17th May 2019 with key representatives from each health board and trust to discuss the proposed model. At the workshop there was general recognition of the challenges described and general endorsement of the proposals including staffing models presented. The financing of the known gaps in funding for the proposed model was not specifically addressed.
3. Papers for EDT and the Minister for Health are now being prepared recommending that the strengthening of the National Health Protection Service is a Welsh Government priority and as such this service should be prioritised for investment over the next three years.

BACKGROUND

Summary of the challenges:

4. The current microbiology/infection services in Wales are fragile and are struggling to deliver on a day to day basis the prevention, early diagnosis and frontline support that professionals and the public require. As a result, avoidable admissions are adding to the pressure on hospitals and clinicians in many cases do not have access to the early diagnostics they require to guide early and effective treatment which in turn impacts on in-patient bed days.
5. The current microbiology estate cannot exploit the opportunity that new testing technologies and robotics can provide. In addition to the lack of access to rapid testing, the current workforce needs to be reskilled and redeployed and the service is unable to recruit to key professional leadership roles.