

**Ministerial Advice****To: Minister for Health and Social Services****From:** NR **Public Health Division****Date: 2 September 2019****Subject: Strengthening and improving the National Health Protection Service in Wales****MATS Reference number: MA-P/VG/3066/19****When is a decision required from the Ministers? ROUTINE****1. What is the issue you are asking the Ministers to consider?**

This advice summarises the current health protection challenges faced in Wales and sets out the investment needed to meet this challenge and to strengthen and improve our National Health Protection Service.

**2. What action(s) are you recommending to the Ministers?**

Officials recommended that the Minister:

- 1) Prioritises a strengthened and improved National Health Protection Service for Wales.
- 2) Agrees the additional revenue funding necessary in 2019/20 (£1.068m) and 2020/21 (£6.035m) in order to deliver a strengthened and improved National Health Protection Service for Wales, and indicate the preferred funding model from the options set out in section 7.
- 3) Notes that capital funding in future years is required to complement the strengthening of this service (estimated as £1.5m in 2020/21 and £2.6m in 2021/22). This capital funding is not interdependent with the revenue funding identified and will be subject to the submission of business cases through the existing capital funding process.
- 4) Notes that further advice will be provided setting out progress on implementation (to be overseen through the CMO's Health Protection Advisory Group) as well as options for additional funding beyond 2020/21 (once budgets are known).

**3. Deputy Director, Statement of Assurance**

☒ I, *I Marion Lyons on behalf of Neil Surman*, confirm that I have quality assured this advice.

I am satisfied that the recommended decision or action, if agreed, would be lawful and affordable. Welsh Government policy priorities and cross portfolio implications have been fully considered.

## Advice

### **4. Context - What is the situation that has led to this advice?**

The recent terrorism incident in Salisbury, the uncertainties caused by EU exit, the growing threat posed by Antimicrobial Resistance and the increased threat of high consequence infectious diseases, such as Ebola, means that health security has become an even greater priority for Wales. International and domestic events have demonstrated fragilities in all the respective national health protection services operating within the UK, which the responsible authorities in all four nations are seeking to address.

Response to these threats relies on the same physical and human infrastructure which is currently under pressure to deliver basic health protection services. Health professionals in Wales are not confident that they could at all times provide an effective response to high consequence infections or other chemical and biological threats.

The National Health Protection Service in Wales is fragile; and the service today is confronted by a number of challenges. These include:

- UK-wide shortages of trained staff (scientific, nursing and medical);
- laboratory estates on many sites which are no longer fit for purpose (and unable to implement rapid testing technologies); and
- the need for increased ward-based clinical services and services in the community to support both infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship.

Although microbiology is a shortage speciality UK wide, recruitment to Wales is particularly challenging when the laboratory estate on many sites is not fit for purpose, and a lack of investment in new technologies and redeployment of scientists means microbiologists are unable to spend time on the frontline supporting professionals in the prevention of infection and the prudent use of antibiotics.

Welsh Government has signed up to the UK AMR Action Plan (2019-2024) but health boards do not have the key professionals in place to support HCAI prevention and antimicrobial stewardship across community health and social care. Health boards have to date not prioritised investment in infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship in community settings.

Health protection professionals in Wales consider that, adequately resourced, there is much more they could contribute in the prevention, diagnosis and management of infection and in guiding prudent use of antibiotics.

### **5. What is your advice to the Ministers?**