

**Embargoed 00:01 AM 25 July**

**25 July 2018**

**'Good care, but inconsistent access to substance misuse services across Wales' says Inspectorates**

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) have today published a joint report following their recent review of substance misuse services in Wales. Substance misuse services cover a range of alcohol and drug additions.

Overall, HIW and CIW found people receive good care from passionate and caring staff, but access to services is limited in rural areas and generally inconsistent across Wales. Specifically, people found it difficult to get the treatment they needed from substitute prescribing (e.g. methadone), detox, rehab and counselling services, because of long waits and a lack of capacity in services.

The review also identified weaknesses in oversight and regulation around the quality and safety of services. As such, Area Planning Boards may not be able to quickly identify, monitor and act on emerging themes and issues across all services in order to protect people's safety. Welsh Government and Area Planning Boards need to reconsider the way they seek assurance about performance of services.

Disappointingly, although some progress has been made, many of the issues identified in this report are similar to those HIW identified in its previous substance misuse report in [2012](#).

HIW and CIW have made 34 recommendations for Area Planning Boards and/or Welsh Government to consider.

A summary of the key findings includes the following:

**Positive findings:**

- People were positive about the care they received from services
- Staff are clearly hard working and passionate about providing high quality person centred care
- People were generally positive about ongoing support and the benefits of recovery and aftercare programmes
- Examples of good practice are seen in regions but there is a need for consistency and further collaboration across Wales.

**Key areas for improvement:**

- More joint working is needed between substance misuse services, secondary care, primary care, social services and, in particular, mental health services so people have their needs met holistically. People often said they found it difficult to get help with their mental health problems because of their substance misuse and described being bounced around between substance misuse and mental health services
- A review of waiting times and care pathways is needed to ensure people can quickly get access to the treatment they need in substitute prescribing, detox, rehab and counselling services
- Greater flexibility of services and outreach into communities is needed, with support out of hours and at weekends to enable people to get the help they need in times of crisis when they may be at a greater risk of relapse and overdose
- Across Wales there needs to be greater awareness about substance misuse amongst the public and professionals to:
  - Improve knowledge about the support available so people know where they can get help
  - Reduce the stigma people experience in their interactions with professionals and increase understanding.

Chief Executive, Dr Kate Chamberlain said:

“Our report recognises the hard work and commitment of staff working within substance misuse services in Wales. Whilst it is positive that patients had good experiences of care within services, they cannot always get the right type of treatment they need in a timely way. It is disappointing that many of the issues we identified in our review in 2012 remain the same. Whilst some progress has been made, this has not been consistent either within regions, or across Wales. Effective joint working across services is needed to address a number of longstanding issues affecting the support for people with substance misuse issues.”

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### **Notes on review approach**

The purpose of the review was to assess whether people are receiving the care, treatment and support they need. The review focused on the following key questions:

- Is the treatment on offer right for people?
- Can people access the treatment they need?
- Do people receive joined up and person-centred care from services?
- How are people, their families and those around them safeguarded?
- What happens after people finish treatment?
- How well are services led and managed?

The review involved national surveys and focus groups where HIW and CIW engaged with over 850 people using substance misuse services and service staff across Wales. The review also looked at the seven Area Planning Boards in Wales which are responsible for the planning, commissioning and delivery of substance misuse services.

## **Notes to Editors**

- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales is the independent inspectorate and regulator for health care in Wales
- Care Inspectorate Wales is the independent inspectorate and regulator for social care in Wales
- Further information can be found on the HIW website [www.hiw.org.uk](http://www.hiw.org.uk)
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