

eHealth

priorities and strategies
in European countries



Fact sheet

Wales

March 2007

Towards the Establishment
of a European eHealth
Research Area

eHealth

eHEALTH ERA



United Kingdom

Health services in the United Kingdom

Each of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) has its own, separately administered health service. All are publicly funded and branded as the “National Health Service” (NHS) offering broadly the same range of services – it is essentially the administrative arrangements that are different. The four health services operate independently, but there is close cooperation and collaboration to ensure that all citizens receive the same quality of care.

The NHS in England is the responsibility of the Department of Health. NHS Connecting for Health is an integral agency of the Department of Health that is responsible for delivering the National Programme for IT for the NHS in England. The Department of Health is also part of the UK Government and is responsible for representing the UK internationally in health matters, liaising with the other “home countries” as appropriate.

The NHS in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government. The Welsh Assembly is a devolved administration that draws its authority from the UK Parliament and has responsibility for a number of issues, including among others health. “Informing Healthcare Wales” is the National Programme for NHS Wales to develop new methods, tools and information technologies to transform health services for the people of Wales.

The NHS in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive. Scotland has its own Parliament and Executive again formally drawing its powers from the UK Parliament, and with devolved responsibility for health and other matters. Scotland has its own eHealth strategy administered by the Scottish Executive Health Department.



The NHS in Northern Ireland is a little different from the other UK health services in that it has a combined health and social care administration. The Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive are currently suspended, but Northern Ireland retains its own distinct administration under the Northern Ireland Office of the UK Government. Health and social care in Northern Ireland comes under the Northern Ireland Government Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with its own eHealth strategy.

Wales

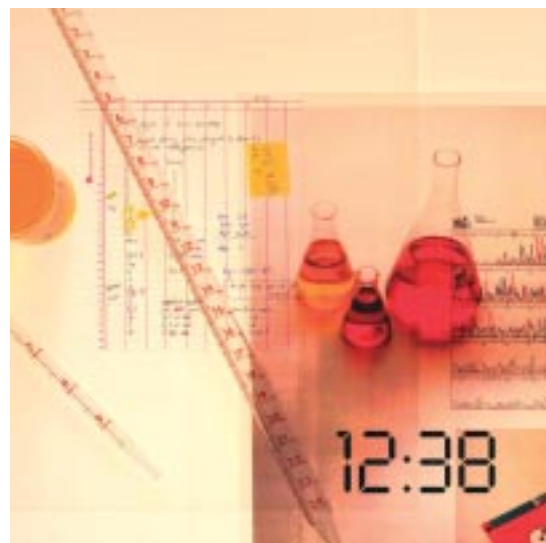
Strategic perspective

In Wales the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for the overall health policy of Wales, including eHealth issues, as a devolved government within the UK. The Welsh Assembly Government has established several programmes of work to support health policy, and the one with the main involvement in eHealth is Informing Healthcare. This is based on a strategy document published in 2003, and an organisation also called Informing Healthcare has been established to deliver the strategy.

The overall operation of the Informing Healthcare Programme is described in its National Case, published on the website and updated regularly. Its primary purpose is to create a set of information and infrastructure services that enable the provision of integrated, person-based information to be used to join up and improve patient care across the National Health Service (NHS) and social care in Wales. Its strategic aims are to develop the information infrastructure to ensure the NHS in Wales can provide patient care that is continuous and integrated, closer to a patient's home and well co-ordinated. The purpose and aims have been expressed as the following investment objectives:

- Make a shared view of clinical care available across NHS Wales.
- Support and co-ordinate the re-design of working practices to deliver the full benefits of Informing Healthcare.
- Create a "world-class" technical infrastructure so that information can be shared securely irrespective of organisational boundaries.

A key part of the Programme's activity is the engagement of clinical and other professionals. This takes several forms, including workshops and other events that take place across Wales. In addition, as part of the governance arrangements, a National Architecture Design Board has been established. This is a group of experts in health care and ICT design who are brought together to make the collective decisions that are needed to make information systems and services work consistently across the whole service to support individual care.



Implementation perspective

The Informing Healthcare Programme has designed a national architecture which defines the environment for the future provision of the information services in NHS Wales that are directly related to healthcare. It sets out principles and concepts, establishing the architectural context in which information systems and services can be developed to support effective healthcare in Wales. The major elements from this architecture will be:

- An Individual Health Record for each person in Wales, which will make available information of most importance to the overall care of the individual.
- A range of care management information services following a strategy which aims to get from the current diversity of information systems and processes across Wales to a more corporate arrangement that can meet the requirements of current and future health care services, which will increasingly operate across institutional boundaries.



These elements will be delivered via a service oriented architecture which focuses on what the information technology does (service) rather than how it is put together (system). This will facilitate communication between organisations, and will provide common services for communication with other countries.

Two key principles of the Informing Healthcare Programme are to develop incrementally and to build on existing assets as much as possible. The Programme is therefore running several service improvement projects, which aim to explore different aspects of functionality, learn lessons for full implementation and deployment, but also deliver immediate benefits for patients and care professionals. These include:

- A pilot service for out-of-hours services which will provide information not currently available, as the first step towards the Individual Health Record.
- A pilot patient portal, My Health On-Line, available in English and Welsh.
- Projects to explore the electronic transfer of clinical communications.
- Projects for the monitoring of patients in their home.

In addition, Informing Healthcare has provided major investment in improving network facilities and increasing access to IT facilities, supported ECDL training, and provided more comprehensive electronic sources of information (e.g. journals).

Future activities

One of the major activities currently being undertaken is to establish one or more strategic partnerships with suppliers, to assist in the procurement, development, delivery and operation of information services.

The service improvement projects described in the previous section will continue, and it is likely that more will be identified. In addition, the following major activities will be undertaken in conjunction with the strategic partners:

- Roll-out of the out-of-hours pilot to an information service for all areas of emergency care.
- Development of the Foundation Phase of the CMIS strategy, which will make available a shared view of patient information within organisations and provide electronic support for some clinical activities not currently available.
- Put in place mechanisms to share information with other UK home countries, the Republic of Ireland and beyond to support cross-border healthcare.

Core resources

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/>

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ihc/>

NHS Wales, Informing Healthcare

http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ihc/documents/ihc_a5-e.pdf

About eHealth ERA

This fact sheet is the outcome of research in the context of the *eHealth ERA* project (Towards the Establishment of a European Research Area). The project is implemented by empirica GmbH (coordinating partner, Germany), STAKES (Finland), CITTRU (Poland), ISC III (Spain), CNR (Italy) and EPSRC (United Kingdom), based on a Coordination Action contract with the European Commission.

The European Commission, Directorate General Information Society and Media, supports this project to contribute towards greater transparency across Member States and other participating countries on eHealth strategies as well as innovation-oriented research and technology development (RTD) initiatives, including the coordination of Member States' eHealth strategy formulation and implementation.

The fact sheet is an excerpt from the report "eHealth priorities and strategies in European countries", published by the European Commission in April 2007. The complete report is available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3346.

Acknowledgements

The eHealth ERA team owes a great debt to all the national representatives and their national experts who contributed to and reviewed the fact sheets. Possible inaccuracies of information are at the responsibility of the project team. This fact sheet reflects solely the views of its authors. The status of activities described is generally August 2006.

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