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Jane Westlake
Clerk to the Health and
Social Services Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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24th July 2006

Dear Jane

The Welsh Consumer Council (WCC) is committed to being the authoritative voice of consumers in Wales by working with consumers and related organisations to present their interests and needs to industry and government in order to generate beneficial change. We welcome the chance to comment on the Health and Social Services Committee's Review of Cancer Services in Wales. This response represents the views of the Welsh Consumer Council and we are content for our comments to be published.

In July 2005, the Welsh Consumer Council published a report on Independent Hospices in Wales ('the Report'). The findings of this report remain relevant and important to this debate, specifically in response to question 7 on service provision for the terminally ill.

The general principles of services centred on the patient and patient involvement in the development of services are vital. Everyone deserves a 'good death' and it is important that the palliative care services available are flexible and that dying people, loved ones and their chosen carers have a direct input into their design. In addition, hospice services require a more pro-active commitment to meet the diversity of needs present in a bilingual, multilingual, multi cultural and multi faith Welsh society (Chapter Three of the Report).

The Report welcomes a holistic approach to palliative care in Wales that is more patient focussed. It is important to consider the emotional and psychological support as well as the physical care. The Welsh Consumer Council suggests that more research be commissioned on public attitudes to dying prior to further engagement with people on the planning and provision of services.

Independent hospices and support organisations, such as Help the Hospices and the Forum for Voluntary Hospices in Wales have a great deal of expertise in delivering patient-centred services for the terminally ill and can provide an invaluable contribution to the debate as well as serving as a source of data and information. The Report confirmed, in particular, the achievement of the independent hospice movement in developing a holistic approach to patient care. Our research shows that hospices in Wales remain committed to their long standing tradition of service innovation and the development of services for dying people – for example, independent hospices were the first to recognise the very specific, social and emotional needs of children and young people as patients.

However, in order to utilise this valuable resource, it is imperative that the role of independent hospices in Wales are recognised and are publicly funded in order to ensure financial security, as time dedicated to fund-raising is time that could be dedicated to patients.

I have enclosed a copy of the Report, which provides more detail on the valuable role Independent Hospices can play in providing flexible and personal care for the terminally ill. If you have any queries, please contact Rebecca Perrin on 029 2025 5454 x224 or e-mail rebecca@wales-consumer.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Dr. Nich Pearson
Cyfarwyddwr / Director
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