



NEWS RELEASE

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MENOPAUSE: HEALTH WATCHDOG PUBLISHES REPORT

The independent health services watchdog for North Wales – the North Wales Community Health Council (NWCHC) – has today released its report about people’s experiences of Menopause Services in the region.

During the Autumn of 2022, NWCHC hosted a series of events across North Wales, inviting patients, their carers and their families to talk about all aspects of Health Services in North Wales affecting people whilst going through the menopause.

Mr Geoff Ryall-Harvey, Chief Officer for NWCHC said ‘In the Spring and Summer of 2022, NWCHC received concerns about the availability of HRT (hormone replacement therapy) medication and also about difficulties experienced generally in accessing care and advice for menopause and peri-menopause issues. This coincided with an increase in public awareness and discussion arising from high profile celebrities speaking openly about their own menopause experiences. At the same time the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Menopause began its inquiry. However only this week, we are hearing yet again that availability of HRT is problematic.’

‘We heard from a number of people about wide-ranging issues. Although over recent years there has been an increase in the awareness of menopause, few women knew of the possible

scope of symptoms beyond 'hot flushes'. Many were unaware that they were in peri-menopause and for some the symptoms of menopause were distressing and debilitating – often impacting on home, work and relationships.'

'All of those who shared their experiences with us felt that few GPs had sufficient knowledge of menopause and its treatment. They felt that with a few exceptions, female GPs were little better informed than male GPs. Most who spoke with us had discovered that social media was often a better source of information than the NHS – particularly during the pandemic – and allowing them to speak with others who were going through the menopause and to share information and experiences. However, as can often be the case, information available on the web can be conflicting and confusing and it can be hard to know who to listen to. This could be something that our health board in North Wales could help with.'

Mr Ryall-Harvey went on to say 'It is timely that the report following the inquiry of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Menopause, published earlier this year echoed much of what we heard in North Wales. There is a lack of menopause specific health checks for all women – many asked for the return of the 'Well-Woman' clinics that were available years ago. All of the women we spoke to told us that they had to fight to get the treatment they were now receiving. Most of them felt that they had to pay for private treatment to get a diagnosis as well as informed and effective advice on medication and care'.

Fiona Giraud, Director of Midwifery and Women's Services at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board said:

'Our thanks go to NWCHC for this important work which will help us to understand where improvements can be made and how good practice can be shared.'

'We provide specialist menopause clinics at Deeside and Wrexham Maelor hospital for women across North Wales seeking menopause advice and support. The availability of this services has been communicated to primary care colleagues. Due to rising demand however, wait for this services is longer than we would like and to help us develop and expand our services we await the All Wales Menopause Task and Finish Group's report later this month'.

Jackie Allen, Chair of NWCHC added 'I am pleased that we have been able to give people a voice and that we have allowed for experiences to be shared with a view to developing and improving health services in North Wales.'

A full copy of the NWCHC report can now be found on its website at <https://northwaleschc.nhs.wales/files/menopause-safe-space-report-2022-final-epdf/>

Note for editors

1. North Wales Community Health Council (CHC) is an independent statutory organization which represents the interests of patients and the public in the National Health Service in North Wales. It came into being on 1 April 2010 as part of the reorganization of health services in Wales and covers the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Môn. The six counties have a combined population of around 675,500.
2. The Community Health Council has six local committees, one covering each of the six counties. Each local committee comprises members drawn from three sources: councillors nominated by the relevant local authority, people nominated by the local voluntary sector organizations and local people appointed by Welsh Assembly Government.

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