**Joint response to A digital special health authority for Wales Consultation**

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) are submitting a joint response to this consultation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on a digital special health authority for Wales consultation. Please find below comments from RCOT, RCSLT and CSP.

**Submission**

Chief Clinical Information Officer role and other key roles

The Chief Clinical Information Officer and other relevant roles within the organisation should be open to all health and care professional groups. The Allied Health Professionals (AHP) work right through the health & social care sector and increasingly, in integrated multidisciplinary multiagency teams. An AHP would be able provide expert advice on how the digital authority can meet its key aims of supporting integration and having digital platforms that support efficient care throughout the system.

**Functions**

We understand that it is proposed that Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) provide the necessary IT services and infrastructure to support national systems used across NHS Wales. AHPs and other healthcare professionals work in a variety of diverse settings e.g. third and independent organisations. Whilst DHCW may not be responsible for providing IT services and infrastructure to these organisations, it is essential that the body considers the interoperability of different systems.

We are concerned that there is no mention of citizen involvement (representation) in the structure of the new organisation. It is a given that the move towards electronic records should allow for accessible records that have some level of control by citizens. It is therefore key that citizens are involved (early on) in national projects that oversee collection of their health and care data.

**Digital education**

We would suggest that you could appoint a lead/coordinate on the education of digital and data across Wales’s workforce. The role could liaise with pre registration providers for all health professions on how to incorporate digital and data into initial learning.

**Funding arrangements**

We would like to seek reassurance on the funding arrangements for the digital health authority and for wider digital projects within the health & social care sector. We are concerned that without clear guidance on the funding arrangements of digital projects (health boards or digital authority) projects could fall between the gaps where budget responsibility is unclear. We are also keen to avoid any culture barriers around responsibility for projects and we believe clear guidance is required. For example will health boards be able to innovate without permission of the digital authority, or will they have to seek permission? It is Important that digital isn’t seen as just for this authority, and that Health Boards continue to try things and not see permission from the digital authority as a barrier.

**Information on Professional bodies responding to this consultation**

**RCOT** is the professional body for occupational therapy representing over 33,500 occupational therapists across the UK. Occupational therapists in Scotland work in the NHS, Local Authority social care services, housing, schools, prisons, care homes, voluntary and independent sectors, and vocational and employment rehabilitation services.

Occupational therapists work with people of all ages, who are experiencing difficulties through injury, illness or disability or a major life change. Occupational therapists consider the relationship between what a **person** does every day (**occupations**), how illness or disability impacts upon the person and how a person’s **environment** supports or hinders their activity (PEO Model). Using this approach, we help people to continue or re-engage with participating fully in daily life, including work, social activities and maintaining roles and responsibilities.

**RCSLT** is the professional body for speech and language therapists, SLT students and support workers working in the UK.  The RCSLT has over 18,000 members in the UK (650 in Wales) representing approximately 95% of SLTs working in the UK (who are registered with the Health & Care Professions Council).  We promote excellence in practice and influence health, education, care and justice policies.

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are experts in supporting children, young people and adults with speech, language and communication needs and training the wider workforce so that they can identify the signs of SLCN, improve communication environments and provide effective support.

SLTs are also experts in the supporting the management of children, young people and adults who have eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (dysphagia), as well as training the wider workforce so they can identify signs of dysphagia and provide effective support to improve the quality of life for these people.

**CSP** is the professional, educational and trade union body for the UK’s 53,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers.  The CSP represents over 2,300 members in Wales.

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