

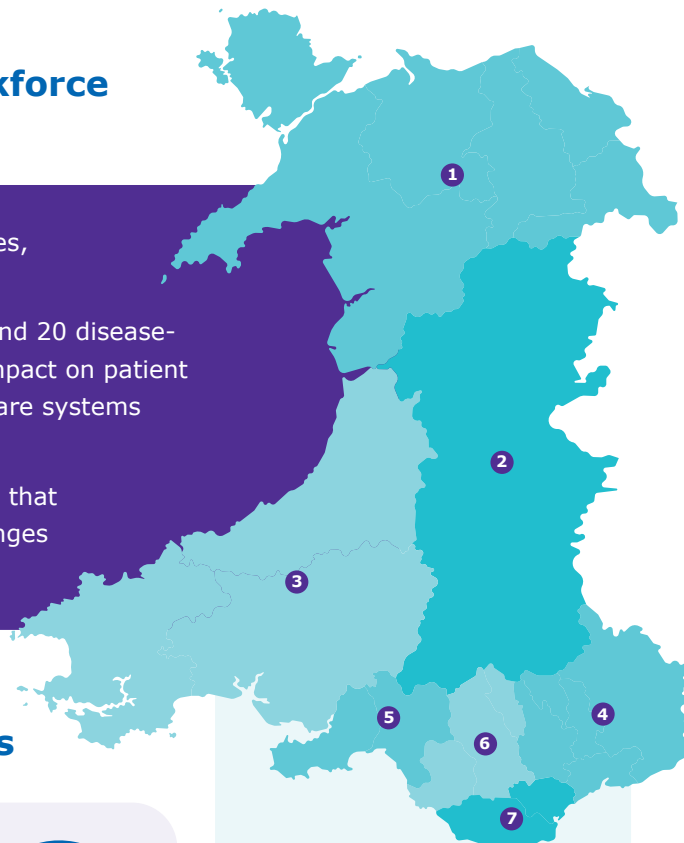
IMPROVING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS CARE IN WALES

Mapping and analysis of the MS workforce in Wales: at a glance

Multiple sclerosis (MS) affects over 6,900 people in Wales, with its prevalence having risen by 13% since 2019¹

The evolution of the MS treatment landscape, with around 20 disease-modifying therapies now available,² has had a clinical impact on patient outcomes. This evolution however also requires healthcare systems to adapt to optimise care delivery

MS patients in Wales are served by a healthcare system that faces distinctive geographical and socioeconomic challenges that can impact optimisation of care delivery



Realities of MS care delivery in Wales

MS workforce capacity is stretched across Wales...

Wales has **1.3 whole time equivalent (WTE) consultant neurologists** per 100,000 population, which is 50% lower than the 2.6 per 100,000 population in the UK as a whole³

MS nurse caseloads average **410 MS patients per WTE nurse** – 30% above the recommended sustainable level of 315 per WTE nurse by the MS Trust



...and there is a succession planning gap with 7 consultant neurologists and 8 MS nurses due to retire in the next five years



- 1 Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**
- 2 Powys Teaching Health Board**
- 3 Hywel Dda University Health Board**
- 4 Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**
- 5 Swansea Bay University Health Board**
- 6 Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board**
- 7 Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**

Clear gaps in MS multidisciplinary teams

Despite **depression rates being 2-3 times higher in MS patients**, only Cardiff & Vale and Cwm Taf have access to an MS-specific neuropsychology service⁴

Pilot data on Advanced MS Champions showed potential **savings of £465,376 annually per site**, yet none are currently deployed in Wales⁵

Only 3 health boards provide domiciliary services, creating barriers for mobility-impaired patients



The largest MS service providers in Wales are Cardiff, Swansea Bay and Aneurin Bevan health boards. Patients in other health boards access MS care through a mix of these providers, as well as from local non-specialised services and specialist MS services based in England, such as the Walton Centre in Liverpool.

MS care differs depending on where patients live in Wales

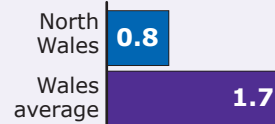
Patients face up to 6-hour round trips for specialist care, with treatment decisions often influenced by travel constraints rather than clinical need



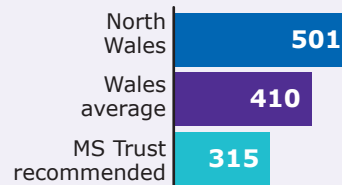
Patients in North Wales have the lowest consultant access (0.8 WTE per 10,000 MS patients vs Wales average of 1.7 WTE per 10,000 MS patients) and highest nurse caseloads⁶ (501 patients per WTE vs Wales average of 410)

Powys presents challenges with fragmented care across multiple English and Welsh providers

Consultant access (WTE per 1,000 MS patients)



Nurse caseloads (per WTE)



Performance against clinical standards varies across health boards

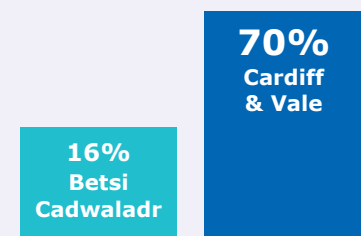
While most health boards report meeting the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline timescales, there are inconsistencies in how the recommended pathway is implemented⁷



There are disparities in disease-modifying therapies (DMT) access, with high-efficacy, first-line treatment uptake ranging from 16% (Betsi Cadwaladr) to 70% (Cardiff & Vale)



High-efficacy first-line treatment access



Strategic recommendations for improving MS care in Wales



Establish a new
MS specialist centre
for mid-Wales



Continue development of an
independently resourced MS specialist centre in North Wales



Develop **minimum service requirements** for HCPs per 1000 patients



Standardise policy and processes for annual reviews



Implement and encourage an
MS specific Electronic Patient Record System across Wales



Prioritise succession planning through
engagement and training

REFERENCES ¹ MS Trust, Number of people living with MS in the UK increases, May 2024 ² MS Society, Disease Modifying Therapies. Accessed June 2025 ³ The European Academy of Neurology Brain Health Strategy: One brain, one life, one approach - Bassetti - 2022 - European Journal of Neurology - Wiley Online Library ⁴ Boeschoten, R. E., et al. (2022). "Prevalence of depression and anxiety in multiple sclerosis: A systematic review and meta-analysis." Journal of the Neurological Sciences, 372, 331-341. Meta-analysis showing depression rates 2-3 times higher than general population ⁵ National Health Executive (2022), Advanced Multiple Sclerosis Champions saving the NHS millions ⁶ MS Trust, Multiple sclerosis specialist nursing in the UK 2021, 2021 ⁷ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Multiple sclerosis in adults: management (Clinical guideline CG186), 2022.