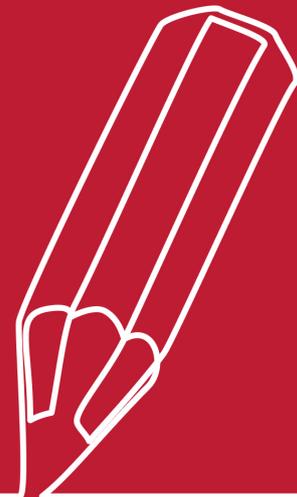


Manifesto 2021



The College of Podiatry 2021 Welsh Parliamentary Election Manifesto

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The College of Podiatry is the professional body and trade union for registered Podiatrists. There are approximately 500 HCPC registered Podiatrists working throughout Wales in the NHS, independent practice and within higher education institutions. As degree educated clinicians, and experts of the foot and lower limb, Podiatrists provide a vital role across health and social care by preventing and diagnosing illness and disease, providing limb saving treatment for people with diabetic and vascular disease and supporting the population to remain healthy, mobile and active.

Commitment 1: Improve Patient Care

Commit to ensuring that everyone living in Wales, who needs Podiatry assessment, and/or treatment has timely access to NHS Podiatry Services that are sufficiently resourced to ensure that prevention is at the centre of care.

The demand for Podiatry services amongst the Welsh population is increasing as the number of people developing foot and lower limb complications linked to long term conditions and co-morbidities rises. At the same time, the numbers of Podiatrists working in the NHS is decreasing. This is leading to increased waiting times to access NHS Podiatry services, especially for people with non-acute injuries, meaning opportunities to provide early intervention to keep local populations healthy, mobile and active are being missed.

It is vital that Podiatry services are sufficiently resourced, so they fully meet the foot and lower limb health needs of their local populations. Podiatrists should be placed within appropriate clinical areas and integrated into multidisciplinary pathways within the Health and Social Care system so that patients can see Podiatrists, in the right place at the right time. In practice, this means that patients should have timely access to Podiatry in primary and community care, who have the requisite skills



and knowledge to work as first point of contact practitioners. Similarly, patients in residential care should be able to access local NHS Podiatry services quickly and easily. Podiatrists can provide educational programmes to support staff working in social care to know when their patients need access to NHS Podiatry, and we would like to see this strategically implemented across Wales. Through this, patients will be able to access Podiatry services more quickly which will enable Podiatrists to focus their clinical expertise on early intervention and preventative measures, which will help to keep the population mobile and active, reducing the numbers of people developing acute foot and lower limb pathologies.

Commitment 2: Futureproof the Welsh Podiatry Workforce

Commit to reversing the decline in Podiatrists working in Wales' NHS by implementing a strategic, nationally funded programme to increase the numbers of people training and working as NHS Podiatrists.

The number of Podiatrists working in Wales' NHS is decreasing, which is reflected in an increasing number of vacancy rates for Podiatrists across Wales' NHS Boards. As demand for Podiatry services increases and the NHS Podiatry workforce decreases, waiting times increase, opportunities to provide early interventions are missed and ultimately patient safety is compromised.

Demographic data shows that more people are living with complex conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and peripheral arterial disease, which can lead to foot and lower limb problems. The reduction in the number of Podiatrists working in Wales' NHS is therefore a major public health concern. In order to reverse this decline, it is crucial that Welsh Government continues to support the bursary scheme for Podiatrists whilst in training, and that the number of places each year continues to meet demand for Podiatrists across all sectors of the Welsh health and social care system.

Currently there is one route to Podiatry qualification in Wales through the undergraduate programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Welsh Government should consider alternative



training routes to attract, for example, mature students who can earn while they learn, and who may live in areas which are a considerable distance from existing Podiatry schools, which is an additional barrier to accessing Podiatry training. Establishing apprenticeship routes for Podiatry would be a good way of achieving this.

Commitment 3: Right to Rehabilitation

Commit to ensuring everyone living in Wales has the right to access rehabilitation services whenever this is needed.

The College of Podiatry enthusiastically supports the multidisciplinary call for a 'right to rehab'. As a result of COVID-19, there is an urgent and increased need for this as the requirement for rehabilitation services amongst the Welsh population rises, in particular:¹

- Those recovering from COVID-19.
- Those whose health and function are at risk due to pauses in planned care.
- Those who have avoided accessing health services during the pandemic and are therefore at increased risk of ill-health due to delays in diagnosis and subsequent treatment.
- Those for whom the lockdown has caused physical and mental challenges.

Podiatry services, which were already in high demand pre-COVID, will be required by even more people following the pandemic. Podiatrists have a huge amount to offer patients in all of the above categories, in particular, by supporting recovery and keeping people healthy, mobile and active. For example, Podiatrists can provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment within the community for Peripheral Arterial Disease. Where this happens, people receive tailored treatment plans earlier, and there is a >90% drop in the number of people who are unnecessarily referred to vascular specialists within secondary care for assessment.² Similarly, Podiatry musculoskeletal services

¹ <https://gov.wales/allied-health-professionals-ahp-role-rehabilitation-during-and-after-covid-19>, Viewed on 11/06/2020

² <https://www.nice.org.uk/savingsandproductivityandlocalpracticeresource?id=2587>, Viewed on 26/05/2020



provide an essential function in keeping local populations healthy, mobile and active whilst also reducing demand on orthopedic services.

We join with our Allied Health Professional colleagues in calling for a commitment to ensuring everyone living in Wales has the right to access rehabilitation services whenever and wherever this is needed.

Contact

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