



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Right care, right place, first time

# Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care

One year on: a snapshot of progress  
in 2022/23 and priorities for 2023/24



# Ministerial foreword

We are one year on from the launch of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care ('the Six Goals'), a five-year transformation programme. This report reflects on progress made over the last year and highlights plans for 2023/24.

The **six policy goals** act as a framework, setting out our expectations for health, social care, and third sector partners for the delivery of the right care, in the right place, first time for people with urgent or emergency care needs.

To help enable delivery of the six policy goals, I commissioned the programme which launched in April 2022 with the focus on whole-system collaboration and transformation through continuous learning, sharing and improvement.

The last year has been remarkably challenging for health and care staff and services in Wales, and across western Europe. We have observed unprecedented demand on our urgent and emergency care services, with a 93% increase in demand for red (life threatening) ambulance calls when compared to 2019. We have also seen occasionally lengthy delays for people trying to access care or to return home from hospital when ready.

I want to personally thank all the staff across health and social care for all their hard work and dedication; they continue to go over and above the call of duty to serve the needs of the people of Wales in trying circumstances.

We knew when we co-designed the six policy goals alongside clinical and professional leads that there would be many priorities to address. And we are not able to collectively make all the improvements we want or need overnight. Some of our priorities have medium or longer-term timescales for implementation and maturation because achieving transformational change takes time. Especially when it involves lining up and delivering pathways across organisational boundaries.

In 2022/23 the Six Goals programme has established key foundations necessary for whole-system change. It has also enabled early progress through delivery of improved and streamlined clinical pathways for people who need to access urgent and emergency care. Some examples of progress include:

- delivery of 76 symptom checkers as part of enhancements to the NHS 111 Wales online platform enabling an increase in use of the service;
- roll-out of a new NHS 111 Wales 'press 2' for mental health crisis pathway to support people to access the right advice, quickly;
- implementation of video consultation technology by the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to help paramedics at scene to make confident decisions about a person's care;
- establishing new urgent primary care centres and same day emergency care services to help more people access care closer to home, and return home to sleep in their own bed following an assessment and treatment; and
- development of and implementation of an optimal hospital patient flow framework to help local teams deliver timely, appropriate discharges.

These projects have helped to manage many more people with urgent or emergency care needs within their own homes or in community settings. They have helped to safely prevent the need for hospital admissions. And when hospital admissions are required, there is now increased and refreshed emphasis on discharge to recover and then assess pathways to help people return home when ready.

There is work to be done in 2023/24 to embed improvement to date and push forward. I want to see closer and more effective working between the NHS and social care leaders through Regional Partnership Boards to enable delivery of the six policy goals. I also want to see further alignment of the Six Goals programme with the plans of other key national programmes and clinically led Boards.

In year two, I expect the programme to build on its early progress and support Health Boards and partners to deliver a number of key plans, as follows:

- clear focus on effective management of people with urgent care needs in the community, 24/7;
- help more people to safely access alternatives to hospital admission, for example through robust, seven-day same-day emergency care services and effective and connected clinical pathways;
- significantly reduce the time patients spend waiting in ambulances for transfer to the care of Emergency Department staff; and
- clear and relentless focus on the safe and timely discharge of patients from acute and community hospitals, supporting delivery of care closer to home.

Health Boards and their partners should work together to consider how they will deliver these priorities through their local Six Goals Programme Boards, building on integrated medium-term plans which set out their key milestones and actions for the next three years. I expect Health Boards to use the funding they have been allocated effectively to enable value for money and the greatest possible impact for their resident populations.

We will continue to hold Health Boards to account for delivery of local Six Goals programme plans, ensuring there is clarity on how they are optimising clinical outcomes, service user and staff experience and value.

I look forward to further progress in year two as we work together to improve the urgent and emergency care offer to the people of Wales.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. E. Morgan".

**Eluned Morgan MS**  
Minister for Health  
and Social Services

## 'One year on'

NHS 111 Wales website now includes

**76** online symptom checkers

up to

**388,000**

monthly web visits



Increased access to SDEC – around

**75%** ↑

of people are discharged home to sleep in their own beds on the same day



Launch of paramedic 'video consultation' technology –

around

**14%**

of 999 ambulance patients are assessed and managed through telephone and/or video assessment without needing transport to the Emergency Department



Fewer people spending longer in hospital, reducing risk of loss of independence and deterioration – reduction of around

**5%** ↓

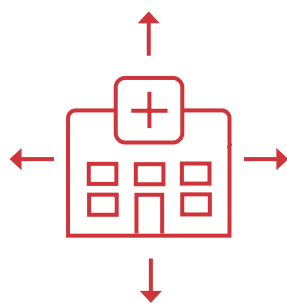
in emergency bed days used by people with a length of stay of over 21 days



Opening of new Urgent Primary Care Centres – expanded to a total population coverage of

**2.2m** ↑

(294 practices of 44 clusters)



Implementation of '111 Press 2' for mental health crisis rolled out across Wales –

approximately **8 in 10**

callers are managed without needing to access urgent or emergency care services



*The above is NHS management data which is intended to provide a proxy guide on progress.*

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# Key milestones for year one

The six policy goals, illustrated in diagram one, sets a policy framework for Health Boards and their partners to aid development of robust and integrated urgent and emergency care improvement plans.

**Diagram one: the six policy goals for urgent and emergency care**



This section summaries the progress which has been made during the first year of the programme. The strategic context and drivers for this national programme are set out in the [Six Goals policy handbook](#) which was published in February 2022.

The Six Goals programme is underpinned by investment of £25m, recurrent each year for the duration of the programme. The funding for year one was set out against three areas of investment:

1. Establishment of the programme infrastructure;
2. £20m of direct Health Board funding to support the delivery of agreed priorities set out by their local programme board guided by the policy handbook and additional programme planning guidance;
3. An innovation and delivery fund to support targeted projects demonstrating potential transformative change which will ultimately be scalable nationally.

It is important to highlight that year on year there will be key projects which can be matured into detailed delivery plans and receive associated investment as well as those projects which will need to become ‘business as usual’ for Health Boards and partners.

## A word from the Chair of the Programme Board

“The Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care programme was established to support Health Boards and their partners to transform and improve delivery of urgent and emergency care services to the people of Wales.

The ambition is to enable people with urgent or emergency care needs to access safe and high-quality care at the right time, in the right place, by the right team. This means helping more people avoid unnecessary trips to hospital – and lengthy stays – which should help improve people’s outcomes, as well as staff and patient experience.

In year one of the programme, the Board has overseen the establishment of important new structures to support delivery of this ambition; and real progress at a local, regional and national level in developing and implementing key clinical pathways, new community-based services and tools that are helping achieve the programme’s aims.

Over the last year, we have seen an increase in people using the NHS 111 Wales telephony and online service; an increase in the proportion of 999 patients discharged over the telephone without need for an ambulance to an Emergency Department; and a significant increase in population coverage for urgent primary care centres. This means more people are accessing the right advice or care for their needs in their local communities without needing hospital care.

There has also been progress in delivering same day emergency care to more people, helping around 75% of people who access these services to return to sleep in their own bed and safely avoid a hospital admission. I have also been encouraged by delivery of a new suite of co-designed guidance to help hospital ward-based and social care staff to transfer people from hospital to their homes when they are ready.

Although there are no ‘silver bullets’ for the urgent and emergency care system, I expect accelerated improvement in year two which builds on this early progress as we collectively achieve the ambitions of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care programme for the benefit of the people of Wales.”

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**Nick Wood**

*Deputy Chief Executive NHS Wales*

**The programme’s key achievements to date have been set out in more detail over subsequent pages.**

As we move into year two there is increased focus on improving data quality, the operational information included in the report from year one is NHS data is intended to provide a guide on progress and therefore must only be considered as proxy.



# Goal one: year one progress



## Goal 1:

Co-ordination, planning and support for populations at greater risk of needing urgent or emergency care

Health and social care organisations should work in collaboration with public service and third sector partners to deliver a coordinated, integrated, responsive health and care service, helping people to stay well longer and receive proactive support, preventative interventions or primary treatment before it becomes urgent or an emergency.

### To enable this in 22/23 the Six Goals programme has:

- Tested a new approach to help identify people living within the 20% most deprived areas of a community and most at risk of long-term respiratory or cardiovascular problems and mental health issues. The aim is to help people manage their conditions to reduce the risk of needing emergency care.
- **Launched “Me & My Health”**, a personalised health plan, and distributed through health, social care and third sector services. The plan aims to help community health care professionals like paramedics make more informed decisions about a person’s next stage of care when assessing them in their homes.
- **Improved understanding of** how to better support people who come into contact with urgent and emergency care services most often. Academic research was undertaken to expand knowledge and understanding within this area of work.

### This means...

*People are being engaged in proactive conversations through their GP to discuss what support can be targeted to meet their needs.*

*Thousands of hard copies of **Me & My Health** have been issued via third sector organisations – providing people with more tools to support their health.*



*The research points to positive evidence based interventions and approaches that can support people who attend such services regularly.*





## Goal two: year one progress



### Goal 2:

Signposting people with urgent care needs to the right place, first time

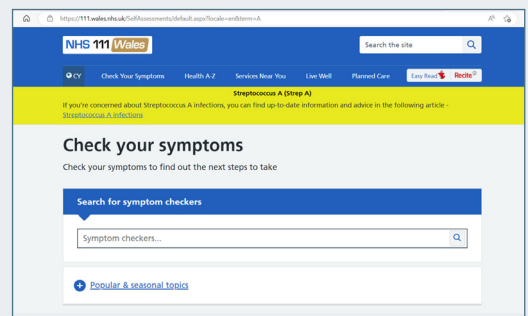
When people need or want urgent care, they can access a 24/7 urgent care service via the NHS 111 Wales online or telephone service where they will be given advice and, where necessary, signposted or referred to the right community or hospital-based service, first time.

To enable this in 22/23 the Six Goals programme has:

- **Completed national roll out of NHS 111 Wales and strengthened the service** following a cyber attack in August 2022. This has included targeted work focusing on consistency of service access and availability, seven days a week.
- **Enhanced the quality and accessibility of the NHS 111 Wales website** to include delivery of **76 online symptom checkers**.
- **Improved mental health crisis response** through roll out of the 111 'press 2' service to enable a rapid response to people who are in crisis.
- **Improved urgent access to repeat medications** through periods of high demand, supported by independent prescribing services and new recruit '111' call handlers.
- **Focused on palliative care**, re-circulating best practice guidance and testing of a specified professional advice line.
- **Promoted 'Think 111'** through a national social media and TV communications campaign supported by ongoing investment in website and digital technologies.

This means...

*More people are using NHS 111 Wales website with over 388,000 monthly web hits.*



*NHS data suggest as little as 9–12% of all callers are advised to attend the Emergency Department (ED) by NHS 111 Wales.*

*There is direct access to specialist advice for mental health – approximately 8 in 10 callers are managed without needing to access urgent or emergency care services.*



# Goal three: year one progress



## Goal 3: Clinically safe alternatives to hospital

People access appropriate and safe care close to home, and with as much continuity of care, as possible. Admission for ongoing care to an acute hospital bed should only occur if clinically necessary.

To enable this in 22/23 the Six Goals programme has:

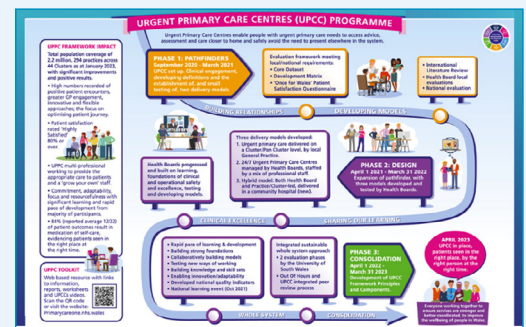
- Launched the **Urgent Primary Care Centre (UPCC)** and **Community Infrastructure toolkits** to provide information, and resources to support expansion and improvements to place-based care.
- Increased the number of **UPCCs** from nine to 13, including new centres in Betsi Cadwaladr and Cardiff and the Vale University Health Boards, and created a national Performance Reporting Framework to enable development of data standards for future monitoring.
- Launched the **Community Nursing Specification with Welsh Government milestones**.
- Issued **national guidance** to enable paramedics to make **direct referrals to Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC)**, enhancing the ambulance and acute hospital experience for people – ensuring they reach the most appropriate clinical destination earlier in their journey through the system.
- Appointed a national lead and opened dedicated **SDEC units** within Cardiff and the Vale and Aneurin Bevan University Health Boards through Welsh Government capital funding.
- Continued to embed **specialty advice and guidance lines** to support community practitioners to make confident decisions about a person’s next stage of care.

This means...

*NHS data suggest around 9,000 contacts with over 7,500 people being seen per month through UPCCs across Wales.*

*UPCCs now have a total population coverage of 2.2m (294 practices of 44 clusters).*

*An increase in service coverage by 21 October 2023.*

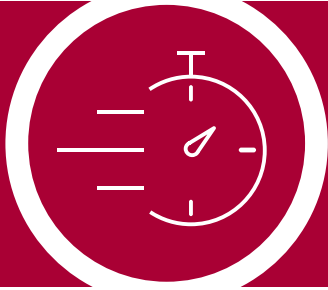


*NHS data suggest around 75% of people are discharged home from SDEC services to sleep in their own beds on the same day.*

*More people are safely avoiding transfer (conveyance) to hospital via ambulance.*



## Goal four: year one progress



### Goal 4:

## Rapid response in physical or mental health crisis

Individuals who are seriously ill or injured or in a mental health crisis should receive the quickest and best response commensurate with their clinical need – and, if necessary, be transported to the right place for definitive care to optimise their experience and outcome.

#### To enable this in 22/23 the Six Goals programme has:

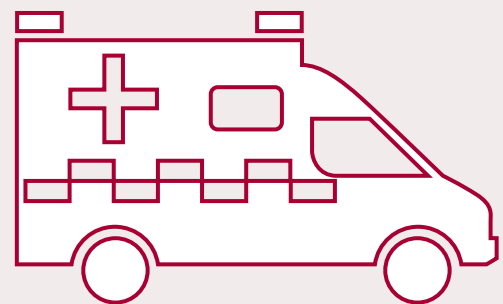
- Worked with the Emergency Ambulance Service Committee to develop **ambulance improvement plans** with a focus on:
  - ensuring the most appropriate ambulance response is sent;
  - safely reducing ambulance conveyancing – treating people closer to home when clinically appropriate to do so; and
  - reducing the time people spend on ambulances while at hospital by improving ambulance handovers.
- **Continued support for the development of remote clinical support technology**, allowing WAST to launch ‘video consultations’ to support paramedic decision making at scene through direct video link to a clinician within the 999 clinical contact centre.
- **Developed a National Escalation Framework** to provide support to organisations when they are unable to deliver all their services and need to maintain the services which deal with the highest levels of risk in the system.
- **Invested in Emergency Department (EDs)** to support improved patient safety and reduce delays through direct access to specialist medicines advice.
- **Established a 999 Welfare Response Service** to provide face-to-face reviews for people who have called 999 and are waiting in the community for an ambulance response.

#### This means...

*Around 14% of 999 ambulance patients are assessed and managed through telephone and/or video assessment without requiring an ambulance.*

*Community risk (relating to those waiting for a WAST response) is better managed, with a focus on betterment of experience.*

*Early indication of an improved experience for those attending EDs requiring pharmacy input or management.*





# Goals five and six: year one progress



**Goal 5:**  
Optimal hospital care and discharge practice from the point of admission

Optimal hospital-based care provided for people who need short term, or ongoing, assessment or treatment for as long as it adds benefit to outcome, with a relentless focus on good discharge practice.



**Goal 6:**  
Home first approach and reduce the risk of readmission

People will return home following a hospital stay – or to their local community with additional support if required – at the earliest and safest opportunity to improve their outcomes and experience, and to avoid deconditioning.

To enable this in 22/23 the Six Goals programme has:

- **Launched the Optimal Hospital Patient Flow operational guidance** with associated supportive guides for discharge processes (known as SAFER, Red2Green and D2RA).
- **Introduced a new measure of the number of people spending more than 21 days in hospital**, supported by an expert group focusing on reducing people experiencing long term hospital care and enabling intelligent operational management.
- **Completed a pilot for Pathways of Care Delays**, capturing all Wales validated data for reasons associated with delayed discharge from hospital with action plans reported to Regional Partnership Boards to target identified delays.
- Appointed a **Home First Clinical Lead** and **updated D2RA Pathways**.
- **Released Trusted Assessor guidance and established** a working group to develop a Trusted Assessor Online Toolkit of information to support the further development and implementation of the Trusted Assessor role and function across Wales.

This means...

*There has been a reduction of around 5% in emergency bed days used by people with a length of stay of over 21 days.*

D	2	R	A
<b>DISCHARGE</b> <b>Pathway 0</b> NO ADDITIONAL SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR DISCHARGE	<b>TO</b> <b>Pathway 1</b> SUPPORTED HOME FIRST	<b>RECOVER</b> <b>Pathway 2</b> SHORT TERM SUPPORTED FACILITY	<b>ASSESS</b> <b>Pathway 3</b> COMPLEX SUPPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully independent – no further support required</li> <li>Multidisciplinary team assessments within hospital 'front door' units to avoid full admission</li> <li>Patient returns to usual place of residence (including care home)</li> <li>Recall Package of Care (RPOC) with no changes</li> <li>Has pre-existing community services in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patient returns to usual place of residence with short term support</li> <li>Preventative services delivered in collaboration with third and voluntary sector organisations, e.g. Meal provision, shopping, housing</li> <li>New RPOC or increase of existing package</li> <li>Short term reablement to maximise independence</li> <li>Assessment and some additional care and support (including therapy, nursing, Pharmacy, domiciliary care &amp; new equipment) e.g. Community Resource Teams</li> <li>Safe between call/overnight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patient is transferred to a non-acute bed and receives rehabilitation and assessment unit able to return safely home</li> <li>Unable to be at home overnight/between care calls</li> <li>Currently needing some care (eg. ADL support/ intervention) 24/7</li> <li>Includes specialist rehab, (e.g. Stroke, Neuro, TSCI)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patient is transferred to a new long term bed, assessment bed or usual residence and receives the complex support and/or assessment for their needs</li> <li>Complex/significant health and/or social needs in usual residency</li> <li>Significant change requiring new placement</li> <li>Longer term placement</li> <li>Life changing health care needs</li> <li>Complex end of life or mental health needs</li> </ul>

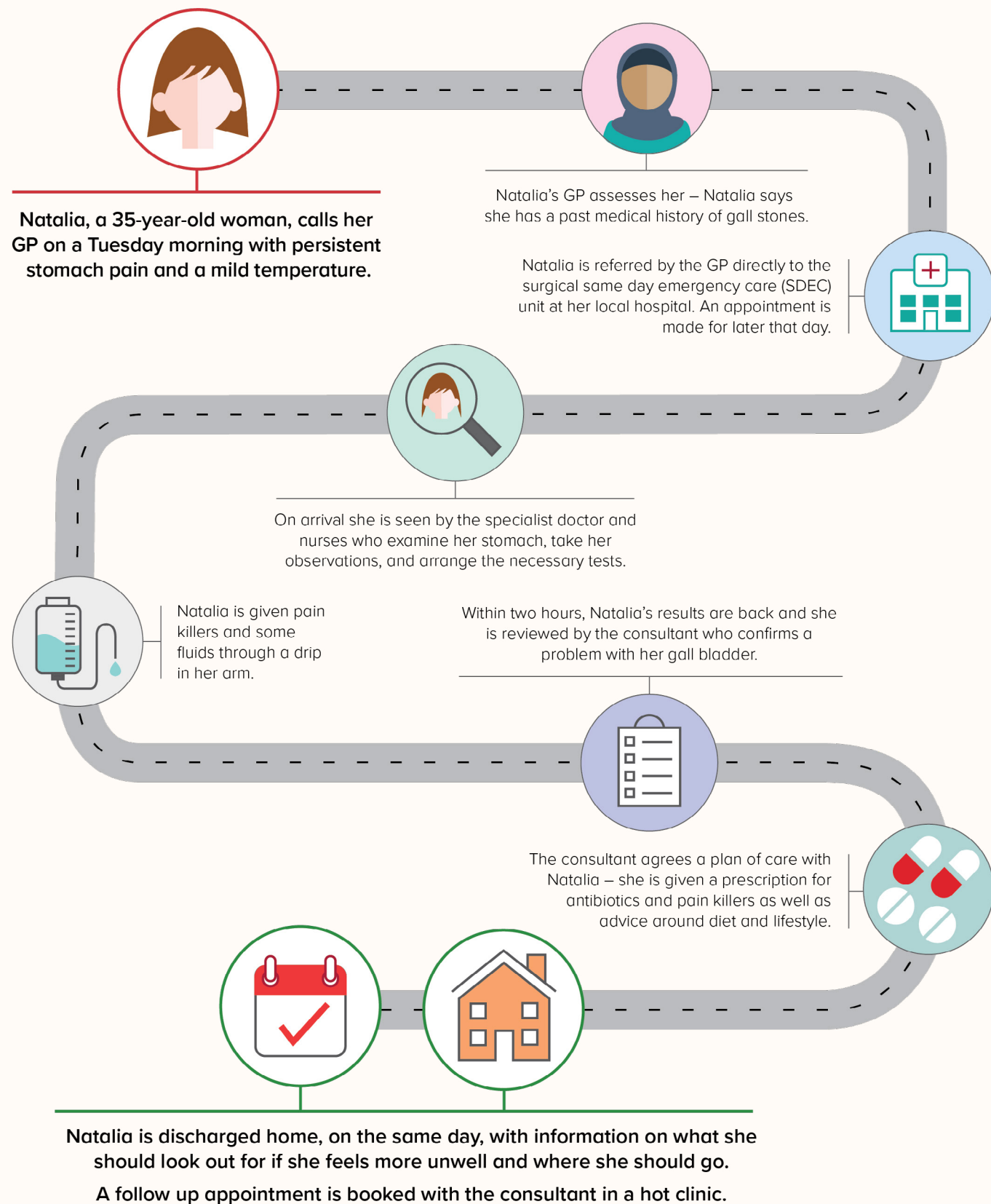
*Discharge is being considered at the point of admission and the reasons for why people are not being discharged in a timely way are better understood and solutions targeted.*

*This will enable more people to undertake the trusted Assessor role/function across Wales.*

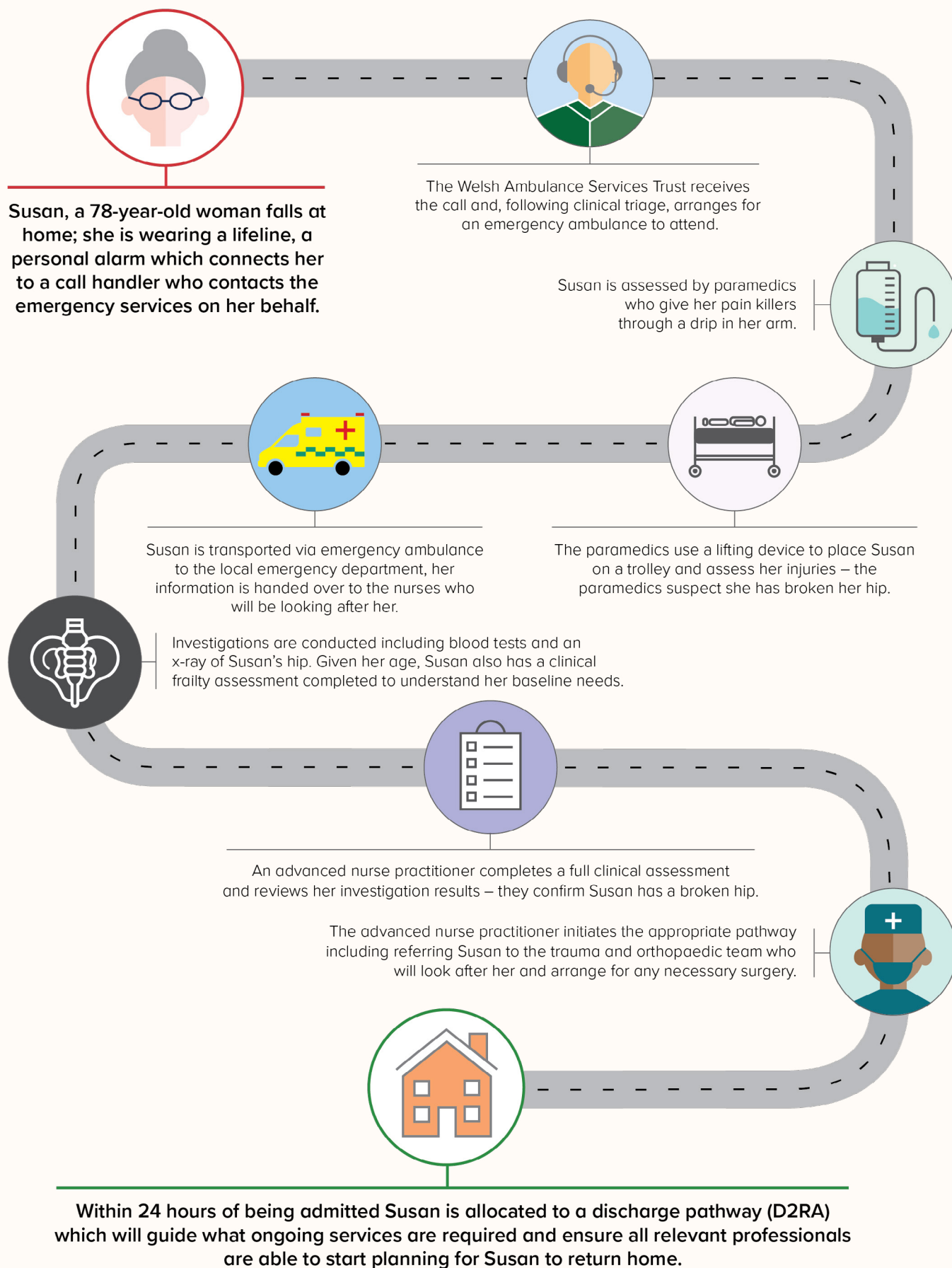
# A journey through the urgent and emergency care system

Examples of how someone could access urgent and emergency care services and receive the right care, at the right place, first time.

## An experience of Same Day Emergency Care



## An experience of emergency ambulance and acute hospital services

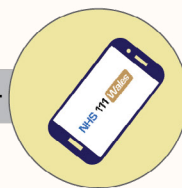




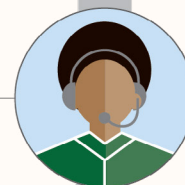
## An experience of NHS 111 Wales



It is a Saturday morning, Omar is concerned about a wound on his son, Rayan's, arm – he thinks his son was bitten by an insect and uses the NHS 111 website to check his symptoms.



Omar believes the bite is infected so following the online symptom checker, he decides to ring '111' directly.

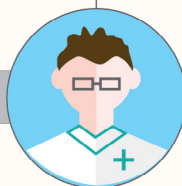


The 111 call handler gathers information from Omar about his son and, guided by a number of questions, decides to refer Rayan for assessment by a clinician in the out-of-hours service.



The 111 call handler electronically passes the information across to the out-of-hours service and takes contact details.

A clinician calls Omar back and asks a few more questions about his son's bite and asks him to send pictures for further examination.



The clinician reviews the pictures and arranges for a prescription of antibiotics to be sent to a local pharmacy for collection, and gives information on what to do if anything changes.



Omar is advised to make an appointment with his son's GP practice nurse in three days' time to review the wound and change the dressing.  
All the information taken during the consultations with Omar is automatically sent to his son's GP and also saved on '111' system should Omar need to call back for further advice.



## Looking forward to next year

### The Six Goals programme priorities for 2023/24 build on the progress made against the policy objectives to date.

The programme plan includes the continuation of key priorities and initiatives that span over the next 12 to 18 months and align with the national planning and performance guidance.

The first year of the Six Goals programme prioritised a substantial proportion of the available budget for the continuation and expansion of Urgent Primary Care Centres (UPCC) and Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) services. These areas remain within the Ministerial priorities for 2023/24 and will continue to be key areas of focus for the programme, although with more focus on integrating these key services as part of a robust 24/7 urgent care model.

### Programme principles for consistent delivery in 2023/24

It is imperative that the Six Goals priorities are understood in the context of other national programmes and initiatives.

With this in mind, the Six Goals has agreed a number of overarching principles which will underpin its approach to delivery. These include:

1. Improved access and **consistency of delivery 24/7** regardless of organisational boundaries – weekend services should match those delivered during the working week.
2. Increased focus on **frail adults**, keeping people as close to home as possible through anticipation and robust planning and co-ordination of needs where this is possible.
3. Expanded **digital and workforce planning** to support the underpinning infrastructure of the urgent and emergency care system and ensure it remains fit for purpose in future.
4. Foster stronger **partnership links** with Regional Partnership Boards to ensure there is wider join up on priorities across Health and Social Care.

### Programme plans for 2023/24

The Six Goals programme Board has endorsed a number of key projects for 2023/24 building on the early successes of 2022/23. The majority of the projects span the whole Six Goals portfolio and seek to secure whole-system improvement for Welsh residents.

The programme plans will be further defined as the programme moves through quarter one. Each project will be underpinned by delivery trajectories, measurements and investment requirements focused on continually improving outcomes and experiences for people with urgent and emergency care needs.



The final programme plan will be made available on the Six Goals programme website which can be accessed [here](#). It will build on the **key priorities areas** which are listed below:

- 1. Developing and implementing key clinical pathways** to enable people to access care in the right place, first time.
  - Introduce or expand NHS 111 Wales pathways for urgent dental, mental health and palliative care.
  - Further test chest pain community alternative pathways.
- 2. Developing and delivering an integrated urgent care model 24/7**, incorporating NHS 111 Wales, Urgent Primary Care Centres, specialty advice and guidance lines, out of hours primary care and Minor Injuries Units – to increase the number of people who can be managed safely in the community.
- 3. Safely reducing 999 ambulance conveyance to Emergency Departments:**
  - Further increase 999 ‘hear and treat’ rates – enabling people to receive the care and advice required over the telephone or through the latest video consultation technology.
  - Further increase 999 ‘see and treat’ rates – enabling people to receive the care and advice required through a face-to-face clinical assessment by the ambulance service.
  - Targeted support to care homes to enable residents to stay at home and safely avoid hospital admission.
- 4. Increase volumes of patients who access Same Day Emergency Care services and are discharged home on the same day**, reducing admissions to hospital – to include progression towards consistent delivery of 12-hours/day medical SDEC services.
- 5. Reduce volumes of patients who experience a length of stay over seven days and over 21 days in hospital**, through embedding pathways to support flow and developing a greater understanding of pathway delays.

In addition to the above, other key areas will be reviewed and refreshed by the programme through 2023/24, including alignment to national and local work on care plans for residents of care homes and Emergency Department improvement projects.

**In totality, the programme plan will ensure the Six Goals programme strives to enable Health Boards and partners to consistently provide the right care, in the right place, first time to people with urgent or emergency care needs.**