Note of a telephone conversation with Dr Gwyn Thomas, 18 January 2006

The Informing Healthcare Programme in Wales has three strategic aims

- To support and coordinate the redesign of working practices to deliver patient benefits through a range of service improvement projects
- To make a shared view of clinical care available across NHS Wales – using an incremental approach to developing an Individual Health Record
- To create a 'world class' national technical infrastructure so that information can be shared securely irrespective of organisational boundaries

The Informing Healthcare Programme in Wales is based on the development of a number of projects, each of which is clinician-led and patient-centred. Projects are designed to make the best use of local knowledge and expertise with the aim of striking the right balance between developing single organisation solutions, which are usually not scalable and launching single national centrally driven projects which have been proven to be high risk.

The IHC Programme believes that sustained clinical engagement is the most critical success factor and ensures active involvement of clinicians through a series of national conferences with 'real time' decision making on major programme activities, In addition all service improvement projects have a national clinical leader who is supported by the IHC Clinical Team's development of local clinical networks. Good governance is assured through an All-Wales National Architecture Design Board, which is a partnership of well-respected NHS Wales clinicians and technical experts.

The IHC Programme wants to work in partnership with private sector suppliers to create the necessary capacity and capability and promote skills transfer & inward investment to obtain value for money. The intention is to create a long term relationship that is responsive to clinical requirements, achieving standardisation where appropriate as well as supporting innovation in the delivery of healthcare.

Dr Thomas explained the philosophy of the Welsh "Individual Health Record" which is designed to support the overall care of the individual by providing the information most important to the overall safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of an individual's care. Initially this will be

- Personal details: (identity and preferences)
- Care relationships (who is involved in the patient care)
- Information from health events e.g. discharge summary, op letters
- Overall current state of health e.g. current prescribed medication

The IHR will be accessed and used by both professional carers and individual patients and will incorporate an audit trail which is also available to patients to show who has seen their record. The Programme will take advantage of the information already contained in existing care management systems and produce an architectural design that enables information to be shared securely and made available wherever care is delivered. It will be deployed initially to support emergency and out of hours care before being rolled out in support of the management of long term conditions and self-care.

In Wales, securely sharing patient information is regarded as being societal issue and not solely a technical one. Agreements to share information are based on matters of trust and the programme aims to build on the existing trust between patients and GPs as a first important step in gaining the public's confidence that their information will be responsibly and securely handled by the NHS in Wales.

The IHC Programme also intends to enable patients to have direct access and control over their health record and have created a prototype called "My Health On-Line" which is being developed to support a local maternity service and explore how patients would design and use an access portal.

The Welsh programme is integrated with the NHS Wales Healthcare strategy "Designed for Life" which is aimed at re-designing services to enable patients to be treated safely and as close to home as possible.

The main objective of the IHC Programme during 2005 has been to gain clinical commitment and create a collective patient focus and the major areas of progress have been

- **Supporting and Preparing Local Organisations**
  Data Quality,, e-Library, Training, National Licensing and Framework Contracts - Access to IT, Health Informatics Professional Development
- **Clinical Engagement and Commitment**
  National Conferences, Clinical Networks, National Architecture Design Board, Consultation and Critical Mass,
- **Service Improvement Projects**
  Diabetes, Medication, Safety, Discharge & Referral, Test Results, "My Health On-Line" Protoype
- **Individual Health Record**
  Agreed Design, Information from GP Systems, Consent Model, Development Projects supporting Unscheduled Care, National Strategy for Local Care Management Systems

Future priorities for the programme are

- National architecture - strategy for local & national care management systems
- All-Wales "Catalogue" of Information Services
- Private sector capability & capacity
- Clinical communications – increase availability of what's already there
- Building secure universal access to clinical patient information – "starting with what matters most"
- Patient safety - through improving identification and medicines management
- New models of service provision – particularly for those with long term conditions
- My Health On Line - Improve web based information available to carers and patients
- Access to clinical guidelines and knowledge
- Health Informatics Professional Development
- Even More Clinical Engagement – Nurses & GPS

The IHC Programme up dates and publishes its strategic implementation plan ("The National Case for IHC") every six months.