

Chiesi Outlines Opportunity for Welsh Government to Act on Missed COPD Diagnoses

- COPD is responsible for 1,800 deaths and 12,000 emergency hospitalisations in Wales annually.¹
- Over 50,000 people in Wales are thought to be living with undiagnosed chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).²
- A new policy proposal by Chiesi UK and Ireland, backed by Mabon ap Gwynfor MS and James Evans MS, will be launched in the Senedd, urging the Welsh Government not to miss the opportunity to diagnose COPD as part of the national lung screening programme.

Manchester, UK – Thursday 29th May – A new policy proposal launched today by Chiesi UK and Ireland sets out a vision for the Welsh government to transform COPD detection and diagnosis in Wales, turning around decades of delayed diagnosis and poor outcomes. With over 50,000 people estimated to be living with undiagnosed COPD in Wales, the *Ignore or Explore COPD?* proposal urges the Welsh government to integrate simple lung function tests (spirometry) and follow-up care plans into any future lung cancer screening programmes, delivering efficient, enhanced diagnostic services to reduce the burden of COPD in Wales.¹

Mabon ap Gwynfor MS, Health and Social Care Spokesperson for Plaid Cymru, commented: *“This new policy proposal sets clear and actionable goals for Wales to lead the way within the UK in preventing avoidable hospital stays and improving care for people living with COPD. By working together to build on potential lung screening infrastructure in Wales, we have the opportunity to better detect undiagnosed COPD earlier.”*

Despite being one of Wales’ most serious health challenges - responsible for 1,800 deaths and 12,000 emergency hospitalisations each year - COPD continues to be diagnosed late, often after emergency hospitalisation, with almost one in four people waiting five years or longer for a diagnosis.^{1,2} As a progressive disease, COPD worsens with each exacerbation, and lung function can never be recovered, diminishing the opportunity for disease control.³ Early detection and effective management can help keep the disease under control – improving quality of life and reducing strain on the NHS.

The *Ignore or Explore COPD?* policy proposal highlights Wales’ unique position to tackle diagnostic challenges by leveraging low-dose CT screening infrastructure established through the Lung Health Check Operational Pilot. The proposal urges the Welsh government to use future targeted lung cancer screening programmes to support early COPD detection by adding a pathway to investigate signs of COPD seen on scans to confirm diagnosis and offer appropriate care.

Joseph Carter, Head of Asthma + Lung UK Cymru, said: *“People who receive a late COPD diagnosis often face worse symptoms, fewer treatment options and poorer quality of life. Wales has an opportunity to catch the disease earlier by adopting a*

lung health check programme that does not exclude COPD. Earlier diagnosis means people can begin treatment and self-management sooner - helping them stay well for longer, avoid unnecessary hospital visits and maintain their independence."

The proposal builds on Chiesi UK and Ireland's collaborative NHS partnerships in England, including the [FRONTIER](#) clinic in Hull and the community-based [COMET](#) clinic in Wirral, both focused on enabling early diagnosis for high-risk patients who have gone through NHS lung cancer screening. Wales' 2023 Lung Health Check Pilot further highlights the need, with 61% of participants found to have signs of COPD (emphysema), many of whom were unaware they had a serious lung condition.⁴

Ralph Blom, General Manager Chiesi UK and Ireland, stated: *"We are committed to working in partnership with the NHS and policymakers to improve lung health across the UK and Ireland. Our collaborative working programmes – FRONTIER and COMET - provide a blueprint for feasible and efficient action that can be taken to transform COPD care away from treating symptoms to preventing them. We have a fantastic opportunity to work together to make a significant impact for people with COPD in Wales."*

Recommendations from the policy proposal will be presented at a lunchtime reception, *Transforming COPD Diagnosis in Wales*, at the Senedd (Welsh parliament) on 4th June 2025, sponsored by Mabon ap Gwynfor MS.

Read the full report, [here](#).

About Chiesi Group

Chiesi is a research-oriented international biopharmaceutical group that develops and markets innovative therapeutic solutions in respiratory health, rare diseases, and specialty care. The company's mission is to improve people's quality of life and act responsibly towards both the community and the environment.

By changing its legal status to a Benefit Corporation in Italy, the US, and France, Chiesi's commitment to create shared value for society as a whole is legally binding and central to company-wide decision-making. As a certified B Corp since 2019, we're part of a global community of businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental impact. The company aims to reach Net-Zero greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions by 2035.

With over 85 years of experience, Chiesi is headquartered in Parma (Italy), with 31 affiliates worldwide, and counts more than 7,000 employees. The Group's research and development centre in Parma works alongside 6 other important R&D hubs in France, the US, Canada, China, the UK, and Sweden.

For further information please visit www.chiesi.uk.com.

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² Asthma + Lung UK. Delayed Diagnosis and Unequal Care. Available at: <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/delayed-diagnosis-unequal-care.pdf>

³ Kerkhof, Maarten, et al. "Frequency and Severity of Exacerbations of COPD Associated with Future Risk of Exacerbations and Mortality: A UK Routine Health Care Data Study." *International Journal of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*, vol. 17, 2022, pp. 957–969. Dove Medical Press, <https://doi.org/10.2147/COPD.S362528>.

⁴ NHS Wales. Lung Health Check Operational Pilot for Wales: Evaluation Report 1. Available at: <https://executive.nhs.wales/functions/networks-and-planning/cancer/wcn-documents/clinician-hub/lung-health-check/lhc-evaluation-full/>