

Investigate Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's refusal to keep north Penarth's surgery, allocating patients to distant GPs.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 21 Tachwedd 2022
Petitions Committee | 21 November 2022

Reference: SR22/3596-2

Petition Number: P-06-1287

Petition title: Investigate Cardiff and Vale (C&V) University Health Board's (UHB) refusal to keep north Penarth's surgery, allocating patients to distant GPs.

Text of petition:

We call to account UHB officials and politicians colluding with closure of Albert Rd surgery (north Penarth), allocating patients to Sully and Dinas Powys, and grossly overloading Stanwell surgery (Penarth Healthcare). We believe the local MS Vaughan Gething knew of the plan and he could have highlighted the concerns to the relevant Ministers and commissioners for Older Persons, Children and Future Generations, to uphold the principle of healthcare services close to home. The system has failed us.

C&V UHB rejected buying the Albert Rd premises when warned, years ago, the GP's lease was due to expire. Their plan to instead provide new premises far away in Cogan was publicly rejected. It failed their principle of health services close to home.

Successive UHB designs for a Wellbeing Hub at Cogan ignored the poor accessibility. Their choice of site discriminated against the elderly and mobility limited persons. While declining to help Albert Rd continue, the UHB offered funds to GPs in Sully, Penarth and Dinas Powys to expand to take the 7000 patients. The UHB did not consult on this plan. The overload at Stanwell (Penarth Health Care) surgery has worsened the standard of care.



We believe that there are only 7 GPs for 17 000 patients. The UHB pursuit of (newbuild) premises in the wrong place is at fault. They could still recognise their error and buy the Albert Surgery from the property developer.

1. Background

In November 2021 Cardiff and the Vale UHB and Vale of Glamorgan Council issued a statement setting out the background to the issues around Albert Road Surgery:

Following the notification that the landlord had served notice on the building and the subsequent decision of the GP Practice to hand back their General Medical Services (GMS) contract, the two organisations have committed to explore options to maintain GP Services for the local community from April 2022.

The UHB's focus of bringing care closer to home and staying within the local community is part of the longer-term primary care ambitions for a Health and Wellbeing Hub at Cogan in Penarth.

The UHB and the Local Authority are supportive in principle of the Cogan Wellbeing Hub and the UHB is progressing the programme of work required to finalise a business case to support this. However, it is important to reiterate this is a medium-term option and will require further discussion with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as well as the necessary planning and approval processes and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and the community as the plans progress.

Patients will continue to access primary care services at Albert Road Surgery until 18 March 2022. In the meantime, we will keep the local community updated with details of future provision of health care as we work through a sustainable solution. We would like to reiterate that no patients in this area will lose access to GP services.

The UHB would like to thank the community for their patience during this time and can reassure patients that we are committed to resolving

this to meet the sustainable health care needs of the local population in Penarth.

The UHB Board heard at its meeting on 27 January 2022 that:

COVID had delayed the building of the hub planned for Penarth.[...] Due to that delay one of the practices that was due to move into the new hub had notice served on its accommodation. (p.164)

The Board also received an update at its meeting on 31 March 2022:

The Independent Member – Finance (IMF) noted the concerns around the sustainability of GMS and highlighted that a number of practices had handed their GMS contracts back to the Health Board. He asked if any other practices were at risk. The UHB Chair responded that a practice in Penarth had been taken back due to the landlord wanting to sell the building. **The matter had been effectively managed by the Primary Care Team with an agreement reached for patients to be transferred to other practices in the local area** (p.15)

The final closure of the Albert Road Surgery in March 2022 attracted some critical press coverage with some patients questioning why the Welsh Government and the UHB did not step in to save the surgery and concerns about some patients being unable to access the new surgeries to which they were being allocated.

The UHB Board also heard on 31 March 2022 (p.231), 30 June 2022 (p.128), and 28 July 2022 (p.15) that the original Penarth Wellbeing Hub scheme was “under review due to changing requirements of Local Authority”.

2. Community Health Council response

South Glamorgan Community Health Council (CHC) spoke to the media in November 2021, acknowledging that it was a difficult situation for the UHB, called for time to find a solution, and noted that the CHC was working to reassure patients in Penarth they would have access to a GP going forward. At the same time, the CHC's Chief Officer noted that patients registered at Albert Road surgery should not move to another surgery because they would increase demand at Redlands and Penarth Health Partnerships.

In February 2022 the CHC hosted a virtual public engagement event regarding the closure of Albert Road Surgery. The CHC noted that “Whilst the event will not

stop the closure, this will allow patients and the wider public in the community the opportunity to share their views and experiences”.

The CHC Full Council on 9 March 2022 received an update on the event:

. It was noted that the UHB confirmed at the public meetings that additional funding had been made available to neighbouring practices for additional staff and telephone lines to help manage the additional patients and the CHC would be monitoring patient experience going forward. Cardiff and the Vale Health Board would also be transferring to the 111 service and this would need careful monitoring for patient experience going forward.

3. Welsh Government response

The Minister for Health and Social Services wrote to the Chair of the Petitions Committee on 27 July 2022 in response to the petition, stating that she appreciated the concerns raised, but:

I am aware that the Albert Road practice had given notice on their contract due to the building being sold. The General Medical Services Contract Regulations set out the notice period that is necessary for practices to give on contracts and each health board has procedures in place in such an occurrence to plan how services will be provided for patients going forward. The sustainability of general medical services remains a key priority for Cardiff & Vale University Health Board.

The health board primary care team are proactively working with the practice to ensure patients have been dispersed into neighbouring practices, by agreement, based on available capacity. The primary care team continues to provide support to the practice and work with the practices to monitor the impact of the dispersal on access to services for patients.

The consideration of future plans to develop a new build integrated health and care centre for the Cogan area are still under review, with ongoing discussions between the Health Board and Local Authority. I understand that options continue to be tested in terms of the preferred way forward.

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