

P-06-1350 Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital now – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 24.04.23

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Comments from the Tywyn Hospital Action Group

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board chose to close Dyfi ward at Tywyn hospital almost 5 months ago. Staff and the public were neither consulted nor given any notice.

No objective evidence of the rationale to close the ward has ever been provided by the health board, who are in special measures, or by the Minister for Health and Social Services. No meeting minutes have been provided recording how and why this decision was made to close Tywyn hospital.

In discussions with the hospital staff it became clear that options were available which would have led to the ward staying open while vacancies were filled. An argument was put forward by the health board to consolidate services at Dolgellau hospital, and to close the ward at Tywyn. The number of beds in the inpatients department at Tywyn is 16, which can easily be increased to 19 and more. In fact, there were spare beds ready and available to be used at Tywyn hospital. There is much more space between beds and overall in Tywyn than Dolgellau. There are far better more modern and up to date facilities at Tywyn, for example specialist modern bathing facilities and gas piped to beds. Indeed, if there was space in Dolgellau at the time of the closure of Tywyn, then the beds from Tywyn did not need to have been moved to Dolgellau. Staff, beds and equipment, have been redeployed from a purpose-built modern facility to a cottage hospital built in the 1920's. If staff were to be redeployed then it was feasible to be from Bangor to Alltwnen, Alltwnen to Dolgellau, Dolgellau to Tywyn - not the other way around.

It is likely that closing the ward in Tywyn was a pre-meditated strategy by the health board based on fragile finances, and we are not satisfied by any of the explanations given. The 'critical incident' mentioned as the reason for closure was created by the health board themselves and used as a spurious reason to close the ward at Tywyn, following a tactic used in the recent past by health boards in the UK. The health board did not take ownership of the continued mismanagement and downgrading of the staffing of the ward at Tywyn, never having staffed to levels to open all 16 beds, and then using the understaffing of the ward as an excuse to close it.

Our petition has collected over 5500 signatures, which represents over 70% of the population of Tywyn and district. The petition has enabled the public to share their concerns and shows how upset people are. The response has been huge. We now hope that the Senedd will lend its support in reopening the inpatients ward at Tywyn hospital so that the healthcare needs of the local population can be professionally met by a properly managed and principled health board not in special measures.

We will continue our campaign until the inpatient ward is fully open and our health services are provided. The cuts in health services between 2017 and 2023 for Tywyn are unacceptable and are shown on the attached chart.

This petition is about the inpatient hospital ward being closed. Instead of focusing on how and when the ward will be reopened, and demonstrating strategies to do so, the board continually attempts to divert public attention through promoting peripheral services they have 'opened': the minor injuries unit (MIU) which has lately reopened part time from 9 to 4 on Tuesdays to Thursdays; a 2 hour 'wellbeing' group once a month; a 'dressings clinic' Monday to Friday, and 'Tuag Adref', where patients are visited in their own homes instead of being cared for at the inpatient ward. Redeploying nursing staff from the inpatient ward to 'Tuag Adref', 'dressings clinic' and MIU, creates further vacancies on the ward. Two band 5 overseas staff have been recently appointed to Dolgellau hospital, when none have been appointed to Tywyn; to add to our consternation BCUHB continue to state that they are unable to appoint to the 3 band 5 posts they require to open the ward at Tywyn and have stated that 'the appointment of two overseas nurses to work in Dolgellau does not impact the staffing levels in Tywyn, and we await an update on the next cohort of overseas nurses and are hopeful that we may attract another 2 to work in Tywyn. We do not have any timescales for this at the moment but we continue to pursue this line of enquiry'. This demonstrates yet again that Dolgellau hospital is being prioritised over Tywyn. We have never had an explanation for this discrimination.

In a reply to the request for comments about the petition on the 26th June the Minister for Health and Social Services was wrong to say that engagement had taken place with Llais, the citizen's voice. I spoke to them for the first time, 22nd August. The minister also states that she cannot intervene with operational matters of the health board, which is in special measures, and yet she continues to promote the health board's stance, without any objectivity or informed analysis, stating that 'the health board continues to pursue all

possible avenues to recruit to the positions required'. If the minister is unable to intervene with matters such as this, then it is difficult to understand what her function is. The minister also stated in her address at the National Eisteddfod that the Tywyn Hospital Action Group themselves are preventing staff from coming to work here which is insulting to the members of the group bearing in mind the history of understaffing and is a direct attempt to deflect the situation that the health board and minister have created. A factor in making and appointing staff is said to be that taking up a position with a health board in special measures, with a reputation for closing hospitals is hardly attractive for health professionals seeking to progress their careers.

We want the Dyfi ward, for in patients of all ages, to be reopened now. We want our beds, nurses, clinics, doctors and staff back. We want the whole ward open. We want the generous offers of accommodation by locals to be taken up and rented by the health board, who promised to do so at the public meeting of 4th May. It now appears that the details of accommodation that were prepared, updated and sent through to the health board have not been shared with appointed staff; and yet the health board state that availability of accommodation is another reason which prevents staff from coming to work here. We are upset by the lack of transparency, the lack of services and the lack of respect for our community. This is our health service, it ought to be managed with integrity for the local people. Faith in the management of our services must be restored.

Your sincerely

Jane Barraclough

Tywyn Hospital Action Group

Comparison of 2017 and 2023 Community Healthcare Services

2017 data from Cyngor Gwynedd Scrutiny Committee and 2023 Community Healthcare Services from BCUHB

SERVICES	DOLGELLAU 2017	TYWYN 2017	TYWYN 2023
24 Hours Onsite Medical Cover	Yes	Yes (GP-COH)	No
24 Hours Nursing Cover	Yes	Yes	No
Minor Injuries Unit	Yes (8-5)	Yes (10-6)	9-4pm 3 days a week
Radiography Cover	Yes - daily	Yes - 7 days	Thursday mornings
Beds Available	Yes - 20	Yes - 10 now 16	No
Out Of hours Treatment Service	Yes	No - Dolgellau	No - Dolgellau
Emergencies	Yes	Yes	No
Inpatient Alcohol Detox	Yes	No	No
Integrated Midwifery Service	Yes	Yes	No
Diagnostic Ultrasound Service	Yes	No	No
Palliative Care	Yes	Yes	No - District nursing Dolgellau
Terminal Care	Yes	Yes	No - District nursing Dolgellau
Minor Surgery	Yes	Yes	No
Podiatry	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Speech and Language Therapy	Yes	Yes	No
Occupational Therapy	Yes	Yes	Yes
24 Hours PB Monitoring	Yes	Yes	Yes
Event Monitoring	Yes	Yes	No
Community Paediatric Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Dental Service	Yes	Yes	No
Video Conferencing Facility	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visiting Services			
General Surgery Clinic	Yes	Yes	No
Audiology Clinic	Yes		Yes
Healthy Hearts Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Continence Promotion Clinic	Yes	Yes	
Eye Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chest Clinic	Yes		
Rheumatology Clinic	Yes	Yes	No
CKD Nurse Clinic	Yes		No
Diabetic Retinopathy Clinic	Yes		Yes
Tele Medicine Clinic	Yes		No
Peads Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes monthly
Diabetic Nurse Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes monthly
Orthopaedic Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Orthoptist Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes