



Jack Sargeant MS
Chair
Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Wednesday 1st November 2023

Dear Jack,

Re: Petition P-06-1370 Save overnight minor injuries provision at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny.

Thank you for opportunity to share some views on the above petition ahead of your committee's discussions on 13th November.

I proposed this petition together with my ward colleague Cllr Jayne McKenna because we worry about the impact the overnight closure of the minor injuries unit will have on local residents, on existing pressures at The Grange and because of fears this is the thin end of the wedge.

In recent years in Monmouthshire we have seen health services repeatedly cut back and centralised. We've recently lost Accident & Emergency services at Nevill Hall in Abergavenny to be centralised at The Grange, even though the hospital didn't even have planning permission to be an all-access A&E unit.

Last year our ambulance stations in Monmouth and Parkwall near Chepstow were downgraded, while paramedics in Monmouth continue to operate out of a leaking portacabin while the neglected former station continues to deteriorate and decay.

In March, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board announced the temporary cessation of maternity services at Nevill Hall, centralising the service at The Grange. Disappointingly, this has now been made permanent, meaning there is now no maternity provision in our county.

This is on top of the loss of primary healthcare services, including most recently the loss of GP provision in the Gilwern area.

I requested that health board bosses answer questions in a council committee about their plans and it was clear that this closure is being considered not to improve patient care but as a kneejerk reaction to the health board's £160million mid-year budget overspend.

*County Councillor Richard John, Leader of the Opposition /Arweinydd yr Wrthblaid
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Under these plans the Royal Gwent in Newport will be the only overnight Minor Injuries Unit in the entire health board area for residents in Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly. I entirely understand that specialist services should be centralised, but services like minor injuries units, which play an important role in triaging patients and reducing pressure on Accident & Emergency units are vital.

It makes no sense for patients from Abergavenny, other communities in northern Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, southern Powys and elsewhere to travel all the way to the Royal Gwent potentially passing Nevill Hall and the Grange.

One of the arguments the health board is making in favour of the overnight closure is that very few patients attend Nevill Hall MIU overnight but at the same time the health board is saying that the Grange is under pressure because some patients are turning up there when really they should be going to MIU and that the Grange should be for immediately life or limb threatening conditions.

The other point that's been raised is that this decision isn't going to put lives at risk - try telling that to any parent who's taken their child to an MIU in the dead of night with a rash, unsure whether it's hand, foot and mouth or meningitis.

Last week, Monmouthshire County Council passed the following motion with cross party support:

This Council:

Opposes plans set out by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to end overnight cover at the Minor Injuries Unit at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny and calls on the administration to work constructively with ABUHB and neighbouring local authorities to ensure that outcome.

I'm grateful for advanced sight of the Minister's comments on the issue, but note that she expresses no view on the proposals, which is disappointing given that health boards account to the Health Minister alone for decisions on service delivery.

Having seen other health services cut back in recent years, we are concerned this latest cut is the thin end of the wedge. We have already received support for our campaign from the public as well as our local MP, constituency and regional Senedd Members, but would very much welcome the support of the Petitions Committee.

Thank you in advance for considering this petition. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Yours sincerely,
Richard*

**Richard John
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