



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Bloc 5, Llys Carlton, Parc Busnes Llanelwy,
Llanelwy, LL17 0JG

Block 5, Carlton Court, St Asaph Business
Park, St Asaph, LL17 0JG

Jack Sargeant, MS,
Chair,
Petitions Committee,
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff Bay,
CE99 1SN

Ein cyf / Our ref: CS/EG (CE24/0211)

☎: 01745 448788 ext 6382

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Emma Hughes

E-bost / Email: emma.hughes19@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 8th February 2024

Sent by email – petitions@senedd.wales

A hard copy will not follow

Dear Mr. Sargeant and Committee members,

Re: Petition P-06-1350 Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital now.

Thank you for your letter dated 19th December regarding the above petition.

In response to your request for an update on Dyfi Ward and what actions have been taken to recruit staff, I am pleased to report further progress has been made. We have recently appointed an additional two Internationally Trained Nurses (ITN) to join the Tywyn ward team. Both nurses are currently deployed to work in Dolgellau Hospital in a supernumerary capacity until they have gained the required clinical competencies, including passing OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) which will then enable them to work independently within the Tywyn team. In total we have deployed 6 ITNs to the Meirionydd area, four to Dolgellau Hospital and two to Tywyn Hospital vacancies. Availability of suitable accommodation in the Tywyn area has at times been problematic, however the town Council has helped here, and the two new ITN recruits have successfully secured accommodation.

Further to the withdrawal of the newly appointed Band 7 Ward Manager, the post was re-advertised and successfully appointed to from within the current workforce which has meant a Band 6 Deputy Ward Manager post become vacant which is currently out to advert. We are hopeful that we will attract suitable candidates for this post and that interviews will be held in the coming weeks.

This will leave one Band 5 nurse vacancy for the ward establishment, and we continue recruitment efforts to fill this vacancy.

We will be able to provide a date for the reopening of Dyfi Ward in Tywyn Hospital once our new recruits have been fully signed off as competent to work independently and the remaining vacancies are filled. Our priority remains patient safety and we require a full complement of staff to be able to provide safe staffing levels to our inpatients at all times.

In respect of the unanswered questions submitted to the Health Board by the Hospital Action Group on 24.11.23, I apologise we were unable to provide the response in readiness for the Board meeting held 30.11.2. Please find the response annexed, which the Hospital Action Group has also received.

Cyfeiriad Gohebiaeth ar gyfer y Cadeirydd a'r Prif Weithredwr / Correspondence address for Chairman and Chief Executive:

Swyddfa'r Gweithredwyr / Executives' Office
Ysbyty Gwynedd, Penrhosgarnedd
Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2PW

Gwefan: www.pbc.cymru.nhs.uk / **Web:** www.bcu.wales.nhs.uk

Mae Swyddfa'r Prif Weithredwr yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a bydd yn sicrhau y darperir ymateb yn Gymraeg heb oedi.
The Chief Executive's Office welcomes correspondence through the medium of Welsh and will ensure that a response is provided in Welsh without incurring a delay



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We trust this information provides reassurance of the Health Board's commitment to supporting the Tywyn community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Shillabeer'.

Carol Shillabeer
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive

Annex 1 – Copy of the questions received from the Tywyn Hospital Action Group and BCUHB's responses

- 1. Following up from the answer provided at the last meeting, in reference to the appointment of overseas nurses to Dolgellau, and not to Tywyn, why weren't more nurses employed there and then to fulfil all the vacant roles at both Tywyn and Dolgellau?**

Attempts to secure international nurses for Tywyn have been ongoing for some time. Due to the rurality of the Meirionnydd area we have been advised to deploy 2 nurses at a time and support them to secure suitable accommodation, which can be a challenge. We are very pleased to be able to confirm that 2 new international nurses have now arrived and are currently based at Dolgellau Hospital gaining their competencies on the inpatient ward which will then enable them to work independently within the Tywyn team. The Tywyn Hospital flat is available for use by these nurses and we have helpfully received a list of potential accommodation from the town council.

- 2. How many nurses from overseas have been appointed to Betsi Cadwaladr health board's facilities in total in 2023, and when, and where were those nurses deployed?**

To date BCUHB has deployed the following to the Community in 2023:

Dolgellau Hospital	-	4
Tywyn Hospital	-	2
Llandudno General Hospital	-	1
Colwyn Bay Hospital	-	1

- 3. We note that at the meeting of Tywyn Town Council in May, attended by BCUHB, the concept of building a community of overseas nurses in Tywyn, offered by BCUHB as a means to alleviate staffing issues at Tywyn hospital was enthusiastically received by locals. If the two overseas nurses were offered the choice to come to Tywyn or Dolgellau, as stated, then were those nurses invited to Tywyn to meet locals and look at the facilities, which BCUHB staff said would happen at the meeting in May?**

The international nurses are provided with information and choose which hospital vacancy they are interested in before they arrive in the country and are deployed to that hospital on arrival. The information provided has now been reviewed to include information about the support available to find suitable accommodation and the offer from the community to meet and showcase the area.

- 4. Lack of accommodation continues to be used by BCUHB as a barrier to recruitment. However, up to date lists of suitable, affordable and available accommodation have been shared with BCUHB. Why is the health board still saying that accommodation is a problem? At the meeting in May, BCUHB staff also stated that the health board would consider renting properties on behalf of employees, as we know other health boards do. Why is the health board now saying that is not an option?**

Finding suitable accommodation in the Tywyn area has been problematic for some candidates, especially those who don't drive or have access to a car. The Health Board does



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provide some accommodation in the area; a 2 bedroom flat on the Tywyn hospital grounds as well as 2 rooms in Dolgellau Hospital. This accommodation has supported new staff on a temporary basis until they find their own accommodation locally. The town council has been particularly helpful in providing a list of suitable accommodation and we will continue to work with them to keep this updated to attract staff.

- 5. Please can you confirm up to date lists of dates of adverts for posts from the last closing date listed in the answer at the last board meeting, which was: 'July 23 - closing date of 16/08/23 - no suitable candidates'.**

Following a number of unsuccessful recruitment attempts the registered nurse post was advertised again in October 2023 and closed on the 23rd November 2023 with no suitable applicants. The post was advertised again with a closing date of 12th December, with no suitable applicants, and is currently back out to advert. The candidate appointed to the Band 7 Ward Manager post withdrew at the beginning of October 2023 and the post was subsequently re-advertised. Interviews were held and we are pleased to confirm the appointment of a new Band 7 Ward Manager, however this means that we are now back out to advert for a Band 6 Deputy Ward Manager, having recruited the current Band 6 to the Band 7 post. The advert for the Band 6 post will close 7th February 2024.

- 6. You mention flyers, posters and banners being distributed locally, please can you tell us where these are located. In your reply you also state that leaflets were distributed at the Race the Train event in Tywyn which was held on 18/08/23, when it appears that there were no live adverts?**

The advert closed 16/08/23, with an immediate request made same day to re-advertise the posts. There is a time delay from request being made to adverts going live, and there were no live adverts for the vacant ward posts on 18/08/23 but there were shortly afterwards. Numerous leaflets and posters have been distributed and displayed around the Tywyn area, the distribution supported by staff and local Councillors. Health Board banners were provided for the Race the Train event as it was recognised that it attracted many visitors, however the organisers advised against erecting the banners due to the weather conditions. There is a banner outside the main entrance of the hospital and staff have also distributed small cards to tourists and visitors during the holiday season. There is an open day planned for 14th March 2024 and as well as showcasing what services are available we will also use the event to showcase the career opportunities offered by the health board in the area.

- 7. The health board say that they wish to work with the local population on recruitment, and up to date adverts and any other initiatives which were suggested at the meeting in May, need to be shared and implemented. When and how will this happen?**

Regular meetings between the health board and local councillors, MSs and MPs have been taking place since April where discussions around recruitment progress and sharing the service model have been happening. The Health Board has attended council and public meetings and local elected members also have a role to represent and feed back to the wider population. We will work with the local town council to look at how we can involve the wider population.

8. What training is in place for current staff at bands 2 and 3 to fulfil the roles of higher bands? BCUHB stated in May that they were working on this.

All staff are offered the opportunity to complete QCF level 3 & 4 and to apply for nurse training. We encourage and strongly support career development for our staff. We are also linking in with Aberystwyth University to support the recruitment of student nurses and placements in South Meirionnydd, and have attended their open days to promote job opportunities. We will also attend their career opportunities day planned for the new year for the 1st student nurse cohort due to graduate.

9. In addition, what is the board doing to ensure that the staff they already have are retained at Tywyn? Nurses and doctors, who are still living locally, have gone to work for other health boards.

Opportunities for all staff groups to develop their careers and enhance their skills are offered and supported. Staff workshops are being held regularly to support staff develop and explore options for development on a personal and service delivery level.

10. Please provide the answer to the question posed at the last meeting, referring to the chart showing the differences in health services in Dolgellau and Tywyn in 2017 to 2023, based on data from Cyngor Gwynedd Scrutiny Committee and Community Healthcare Services from BCUHB, and asking for dates for their reinstatement. You said you would respond in full.

The time between 2017 and 2023 has seen many changes in service delivery across specialties and sites. Various factors impact the need for change including staff resource, with other drivers such as technology and specialty guidelines and recommendations based on evidence and best practice. From the information you refer to/have provided, there are two service areas which are no longer operational from the Tywyn site at this time. These are the General Surgery clinic, provided by Hywel Dda Health Board, which ceased during covid and has yet to recommence, and the GP Out of Hours service, which has changed the service model to operate from Alltwen Hospital and Ysbyty Gwynedd, servicing the whole of the West region including Tywyn. The lack of telemedicine clinics has also been noted and we have contacted service leads within both Hywel Dda and BCUHB to remind them of the availability of telemedicine technology across all our community sites, including Tywyn, so that patients can attend clinic appointments virtually, without the need to travel to respective District General Hospital sites such as Bronglais or Bangor for their appointments. It should be noted that not all clinical conditions are suitable for remote consultations, but it remains an option for patients to access services where clinically safe and appropriate.

There have also been several new service developments in Tywyn since the temporary ward closure in April 2023, which have been very well received by the local population who are able to have care closer to home as well as in their own home via the development of the Tuag Adref service. This service has supported 79 patients providing 3,500 home visits since May 2023. Tuag Adref is providing support for patients to remain at home when previously they would have been admitted for social reasons, as well as supporting patients to return home with ongoing low level support following a stay in hospital. Tuag Adref has reduced the numbers of delayed hospital discharges, releasing beds for other patients who require rehabilitation in a community hospital.



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The development of the Treatment Room has also resulted in improved access to service locally, supporting patients to be seen as part of an integrated service model, as well as releasing capacity in the GP practice and District Nursing services.

We are very proud of our staff for rising to the challenge of developing new services to the area in the interim period of the temporary ward closure and remain committed to continuing these services once the inpatient ward reopens.

Please see attachment with details/notes.

11. *The group have been asked often about the employment of permanent Doctors at Tywyn Health Centre. This was also a subject asked about at the meeting in May. Please can you confirm the current up to date position regarding Doctors at Tywyn Health Centre?*

There is currently one GP employed full time at the Tywyn practice, supported by the wider multidisciplinary team. They are supported by a number of regular locums. We are very pleased to have recently appointed to one vacancy, with a provisional start date in May 2024. We are also hopeful of appointing another GP to the remaining substantive position in the near future, with the interview date being arranged. In addition to this we are in discussion with a GP trainee, who qualifies later this year and is interested in joining the Tywyn practice. To mitigate the challenges of recruiting to the South Meirionnydd area, we offer an attractive relocation package to support individuals wishing to move into the area and have worked closely with our colleagues in the Primary Care Academy to offer participation in the GP Plus scheme, a comprehensive training program which allows GPs to develop and enhance specialist skills.

12. *In addition, what plans do you have for Doctors covering the inpatient ward?*

We are exploring how the health board can contract with doctors to provide medical cover for community hospital in-patient beds. The cover provided could be via the managed practice, co-located on the Tywyn Hospital site, or be via invitations to tender for the provision of this service.