

Petitions Briefing

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 September 2024
Petitions Committee | 16 Medi 2024

Reference: SR24-8813-1

Petition Number: P-05-1444

Petition title: Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Service/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Text of petition: Not everyone can afford to travel to Wrexham. Not everyone can afford to pay privately to go to a Menopause clinic. Not everyone has the time to go to Wrexham, maybe they care for children and family members etc. Everyone should have the choice. This should be on our doorstep in Ysbyty Gwynedd with more specialist services local to North Wales including regularly updates for GP's, Gynaecologists, practitioners and employers supporting them on Menopause and the benefits of HRT.

The health board expect women to travel to the nearest NHS menopause clinic in Wrexham, as they are cutting back the little support we have in Ysbyty Gwynedd, this is not acceptable and especially in the current financial crisis. We need resource on our doorstep local to us; the health board do not meet the demands of women suffering the ordeal, misery, pain, and discomfort along with all the other symptoms of the Menopause and the impact on their family.

Welsh Government must invest more in menopause resources and services in Wales.



1. Background

Menopause is a natural part of aging that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. It typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, and is diagnosed after 12 months without a menstrual period. Menopause happens when the ovaries stop producing reproductive hormones, particularly estrogen and progesterone. The symptoms before menopause, known as perimenopause, and after, post-menopause, can last for years.

Despite the universality of menopause, the **British Menopause Society, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Society for Endocrinology** say there has been a lack of support for women going through this phase. They say many women report a lack of education and their healthcare professionals' lack of adequate training on the menopause.

Fair Treatment for the Women in Wales emphasise that women make up 52% of the population in Wales. At some point in their lives, these women will experience menopause. **Public Health Wales report** that around 1 in 3 women are either currently going through or have reached the menopause.

In terms of accessing services for menopause in Wales, the majority of women in Wales access advice about menopause-related symptoms, including Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) prescriptions, from primary care services. Women with menopause-related symptoms are seen in secondary care in general gynaecology clinics. Specialist menopause clinics are also available in some areas to see women with more complex menopause-related issues, without the need for a referral into secondary care. These are run by menopause specialists.

Welsh Government Initiatives on Menopause

The Welsh Government has been working on a number of initiatives to improve menopause care and support across Wales, including:

- The Welsh Government established the **All-Wales Menopause Task and Finish Group** in July 2022. This group comprised healthcare professionals, service-user representatives, and Welsh Government officials. Their goal was to address inequitable access to menopause services and provide recommendations for improved care.
- The group published its **Final Report** in January 2023. The report made a number of recommendations to ensure high standards of menopause

care. This includes raising public awareness, demand-capacity modelling for services, staff training and implementing best practices based on National Institute for Health and Care (NICE) guidelines.

- The Welsh Government has emphasised the importance of menopause in GP training and continuous professional development provided by Health Education and Improvement Wales.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Menopause Provision

In July 2023, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) launched a Menopause Café. This initiative includes virtual and face-to-face sessions for staff to discuss menopause-related issues. These sessions aim to provide support and raise awareness within the workplace.

2. Welsh Government Action

The Welsh Government provided a response to the Petition on 3 July 2024, stating it recognised that “there are improvements to be made in menopause care, treatment and support and greater consistency in those services across Wales”.

The response refers to the NHS Wales 10-year women’s health plan, which is being developed to deliver the ambitions set out within the Welsh Government’s Quality Statement for Women and Girl’s Health. Further details about the plan are provided in this Senedd Research article, ‘Women’s health needs and the pursuit of equity: the absence of a dedicated plan’.

The Welsh Government clarify that the recommendations made by the All-Wales Menopause Task and Finish Group in their final report will be taken forward as part of the Women’s Health Plan. The Women’s Health Plan is scheduled for publication by December 2024.

Specifically in relation to BCUHB, the response states

All gynaecology consultants across the three hospital sites in North Wales see women with menopause-related symptoms in their general gynaecology clinics.

Specialist menopause clinics are run by the three menopause specialists and they see people with more complex menopause-related issues, such as multiple treatment failures, primary ovarian insufficiency, complex medical problems, high-risk cancer genes or hormone

dependent cancer and testosterone initiation. These clinics are based at Deeside and Wrexham Maelor Hospital. A mix of face-to-face and virtual slots are available based on patient choice. This is in addition to e-advice for women via their GP practice.

3. Welsh Parliament action

There have been questions asked in the Senedd on menopause. For instance,

- Conservative MS Laura Anne Jones shared her personal experience of menopause in May 2024. She called on the Welsh Government to ensure better employment support is available for women experiencing menopause.
- Labour MS Vikki Howells asked the then Health Minister, Eluned Morgan MS about support for women in Wales who are experiencing the menopause in June 2021. Eluned Morgan MS responded that “the Welsh Government takes women’s health, including menopausal concerns, very seriously and expects all health boards to provide a full range of services to women experiencing the menopause in accordance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance”.

In addition, the Senedd has been proactive in addressing menopause-related issues. On World Menopause Day, the Senedd announced that they are now one of the UK’s leading organisations when it comes to supporting staff who are experiencing menopause. The Senedd Commission became the first organisation in Wales to adopt the BSI’s (British Standards Institution) guidance on menopause and menstruation.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.