

**P-04-431 Against Health Cuts from the Residents of
Pembrokeshire – Correspondence from the petitioner to the
Chair, 30.10.2013**

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Chairman SWAT
30th October 2013**

**Mr William Powell AM
Chairman Petitions Committee
Welsh Government**

Ref: P-04-367/394/430/455

Dear Mr Powell

I am writing to you as part of our ongoing petition to save ALL services at Withybush Hospital and in particular to respond to the Scrutiny Panel report on Neonatal services in West Wales.

May I first say that I have to applaud the way that the Health Board focused everyone's attention onto the loss of neonatal services at Withybush DGH.

In their document of proposals released on 15 January 2013 it was promised that Consultant Obstetrics and Consultant Paediatrics would be retained at Withybush DGH. An uproar then ensued over the proposed closure of SCBU at Withybush and the aspirational development of a level 2 Neonatal unit at Glangwili. This eventually led to the CHC's referral and the Health Minister's decision to ask for a Scrutiny Panel to look into the proposals for neonatal services.

Below is the preface to their report.

“The Panel would like to preface this advice by stating that the configuration of neonatal services cannot be determined in the absence of clear and definite plans for obstetric and midwifery services in the Hywel

Dda area, including Bronglais Hospital, Ceredigion as well as at Glangwili Hospital, Carmarthen, and Withybush Hospital, Haverfordwest. Our advice to the Minister is to seek confirmation from Hywel Dda Local Health Board of the maternity (obstetric and midwifery) plans that will be implemented before reaching a conclusion on the configuration of neonatal services.”

Whilst much has been made of the one paragraph suggesting that a level 2 neonatal unit at Glangwili can be supported the rest of the document makes it quite clear that the Health Board have misled the public, the CHC, the Health Minister and indeed the Welsh Government. This has led to the wrong group of experts on the Scrutiny panel being asked the wrong question.

They make it quite clear on many occasions throughout the document that the Obstetric and Paediatric plans were beyond their remit and yet were integral to any service change model. There were no Obstetric and Paediatric plans available to the panel in the Health Board proposals save the vague promises which I have already alluded to and which the panel obviously found incongruous with the development of a level 2 neonatal unit and the transfer of high risk Obstetrics to one site.

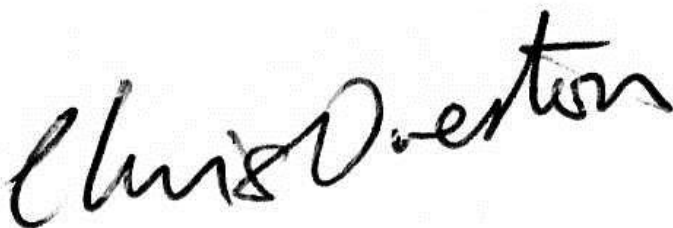
Even now as you are reading this letter and discussing the Scrutiny panel report in your meeting on 11 November there will be groups of doctors and midwives discussing what kind of Obstetric and Paediatric services there can be at each site. A deadline has been set and the pressure is on to come up with something palatable to the Health Minister and the Welsh Government. Of particular difficulty is the arrangement for Paediatrics which in the small print of the 15 January proposals acknowledged that it might be impossible to support Paediatrics at two sites in the South of Hywel Dda.

“However, if recruitment problems mitigate against safe and sustainable acute Paediatric services in both Glangwili and Withybush Hospitals, the Board is asked to approve to locate a single service in Glangwili Hospital for the South of Hywel Dda”

There is in fact a serious issue developing already in the Paediatric rotas at Withybush DGH as a direct result of management interference and obstruction in appointing to various unfilled posts. The management I am sure will say that they have been trying very hard to recruit but this is simply not true. Following a recent advert 18 applications were received for middle tier doctors in Paediatrics which was whittled down to a shortlist of 8 of which 4 interviewed and 2 were appointed. The Paediatric Lead (not based in Withybush and did not take part in the process of appointment at any stage) has stopped one of the two appointees from taking up post for no good reason. The consultants are having to work unsafely without middle grade support during some shifts each week. There is a lack of desire by management to find a solution to an unfilled consultant post of almost one year's duration even though the Consultants at Withybush have a solution and a Consultant colleague from a distant hospital who is keen to transfer to Withybush.

In April 2014 the Health Board will be transferring all trainee grade doctors to Glangwili and unless a suitable number of non training grade doctors are employed by the health board in advance of this date there could be a catastrophe affecting the provision of care for children, women and newborns due to poor planning by Hywel Dda management and a sudden, almost overnight removal of Paediatric rotas at Withybush. Pregnant women and sick children will have to go to Glangwili which as yet does not have any increased capacity in Maternity, Paediatrics or Neonatal cots. I know that this is probably digressing but this could actually be as big a problem as that which has been reported in the press about the Staffordshire hospital failings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Oeston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Overton
Chairman SWAT