

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
Petitions Committee

David Rees AM  
Chair  
Health and Social Care Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd / Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Our ref: P-04-600

22 January 2015

Dear David

**Petition Title – P 04-600 Petition to Save General Practice Wales**

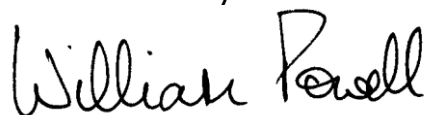
The attached petition, from the Royal College of General Practitioners Wales (RCGP), collected over 15,000 signatures and was considered by the Petitions Committee for the first time in October last year. The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services seeking his views on the petition.

The Minister's response reached us in early December and we considered it, along with comments from the Chair of RCGP Wales, Paul Myres, at the first available opportunity, which was at our meeting on Tuesday this week.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful if your Committee could consider the issues raised by the petition and in the associated correspondence. I understand that your Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into the GP workforce in Wales and is taking evidence (including from the RCGP) next week.

It may be that the petition and responses to it will assist you in your consideration. I would be most grateful if you could keep me informed of any developments.

Yours sincerely



**William Powell AC / AM**  
Cadeirydd / Chair

Enclosures: Petition, Letter from Health Minister, Letter from RCGP Wales

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

## **P-04-600 Petition to save general practice – Wales**

### **Petition Wording**

Despite carrying out 90% of all NHS patient contacts, general practice only receives 8.39% of the NHS budget in the UK — an historic low. By 2017, this is projected to plunge to just 7.29%

As a result, general practice is facing a growing crisis.

Due to the sheer volume of GP workloads, in this year alone, patients will have to wait longer than a week to see their GP on at least 27m occasions.

And, according to a poll carried out in March, more than three fifths of the public now believe that the number of patient consultations carried out by GPs — up to 60 per day — is threatening the level of patient care.

To protect high quality services for all patients, I call on the First Minister to increase the share of the NHS budget spent on general practice in Wales to 11% by 2017.

This shift in funding would enable general practice to deliver: Shorter waiting times for appointments and more flexible opening hours

Longer consultations, especially for people with long term conditions.

More opportunity for patients to see a GP who knows them

Better care co-ordination and planning, especially for the elderly and those with complex needs

Positive benefits for the NHS as a whole, reducing pressure on hospitals

GP surgeries sit at the heart of local communities. I demand that the Welsh Government acts now to ensure practices have the resources they need to continue to provide the high quality care patients deserve.

**Petitioner:** Royal College of General Practitioners.

**Lead petitioner:** Eurwen Petitti

**First Consideration:** 7 October 2014

**Signatures:** 15,000 paper signatures and over 500 electronic signatures collected on an alternative e-petition website.

Mark Drakeford AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-600  
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/05470/14

William Powell AM  
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales  
Chair  
Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
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[Petition@Wales.gov.uk](mailto:Petition@Wales.gov.uk)

29 October 2014

*Dear William,*

Thank you for your letter of 17 October on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition: P-04-600 Save General Practice, from the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Thank you for bringing my attention to this petition. I support fully General Practice as an integral part of the NHS, and recognise that GPs, along with other healthcare professionals across Wales, are facing increased daily pressures.

The Welsh Government is committed to continuous investment in the health service and ensuring Health Boards align their services to provide the maximum benefit for patients within the resources available. We are working towards a preventative primary care-led NHS; one that is integrated with social care and has close links with services provided by the third and independent sectors.

Since 2003, investment in general practice has increased by £137m; from £322m in 2003-04 to £459m in 2013-14, demonstrating our commitment to provide safe and sustainable health services in the community and close to people's homes. In relation to 2014-15, in line with the recommendations of the Review Body for Doctors and Dentists, investment in general practice has been increased by a further 0.28% or £1.3m.

In addition, I announced recently a further investment of £3.5m for primary health care services in 2014-15. This investment reflects the need to rebalance on the principles of prudent healthcare the way the NHS provides services.

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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*Printed on 100% recycled paper*

The funding will be targeted at action to improve health and reduce inequalities in the most deprived communities, develop primary care teams and provide eye care services closer to people's homes.

The additional funding will help to realise our ambition to create a strong, highly-trained primary care workforce, which can deliver a wide-range of services in local communities, reducing our dependence on hospital-based care, together with tackling poverty and reducing inequalities which are key priorities for the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely,  
Mark

**Mark Drakeford AC / AM**

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services

January 14 2015

The Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay

Dear Chair of the Petitions Committee

The Royal College of GPs Wales is grateful for the Minister's response and his recognition of the pressures facing General Practice.

We were disappointed that his letter did not acknowledge the fall in funding in real terms over the last four years. This shortfall will hinder the essential development of general practice to meet the needs of the Welsh population and the aspirations of the Welsh government. A boost in investment for general practice is vital if we are to meet the changing needs of patients, reduce pressure on the rest of the NHS and place our health service on a stronger long-term financial footing.

Whilst GP workloads are increasing, funding for general practice in Wales has fallen, in real terms, from £451.3m in 2009/10 to £438.0m (HSCIC, September 2014 and Autumn Statement, December 2014) in 2013/14, with total investment falling by 2.9%. This is having a concerning impact on patients – with as many as 650,000 people finding it difficult to get an appointment to see a GP in Wales last year.

There is growing evidence that the capacity of the general practice workforce to meet the changing and increasing demands of patients is under threat. Firstly, demand for general practice is increasing and this is causing additional workload pressures for GPs and their teams. There is also strong evidence that the care general practice is required to deliver is becoming more complex as we are becoming an ageing population.

The general practice workforce is also ageing. In Wales, over 23% of our GPs are over 55 and many are choosing to retire early, often due to work pressures and stress.

Wales ranks third in the UK in GP coverage per population and RCGP Wales estimates that we will need an additional 95 GPs this year just to reach the UK average. We will need even more to replace those who leave and far more to meet the needs and challenges ahead.

The RCGP's Put Patients First: Back General Practice campaign, a collaborative of General Practice staff and partner organisations, focuses on the need for urgent additional resources as well as focusing on the key themes that are inhibiting GPs from building on the excellent quality of care they currently provide despite these challenges.

We believe that for general practice to play its critical role in caring for patients in the future NHS, it is important that there are enough GPs and practice nurses; that these doctors and nurses have sufficient time, both in and outside the consultation, to understand the patient's needs and concerns to provide the interventions needed. They need to receive sufficient training to develop the capabilities required to deliver the high quality services that patients, carers and families rightly expect.

RCGP Wales welcomes the £10m fund identified in the primary care plan but it still falls far short of the investment needed to address the shortfall in funding for general practice alone. General practice received 8.5% of total NHS expenditure in 2005/06, it now receives 7.7%. The primary care plan mentions the "transfer of resources from hospitals to the community" over the next four years. The Minister has given us no assurance as to whether or how that will happen as it remains within the remit of LHBs to decide how the money is distributed.

Recent research commissioned by the Royal College of GPs shows that an increase in access to general practice would lead to a reduction in the number of A&E attendances in Wales. Estimates place the proportion of attendances that could have been dealt with in general practice at between 15 and 26% and thereby lead to a saving of up to £21.5m each financial year at a cost of £3.5m, rising to annual savings of up to £34m by the end of 2019/20. The economic argument is palpable.

The pressures on general practice to deliver effective care are mounting, as is the need to deliver continuity of care and accessible services. The crisis of demand versus capacity in the health service is not new; it has not arisen overnight and neither can it be solved quickly. Sustainable solutions must be found to increase workforce capacity and enable general practices to continue to deliver the level of service that their patients expect now, as well as taking on the challenge of providing more complex care, spending longer with their patients and communities and taking on new roles and responsibilities.

We hope that the Minister will take action to ensure that investment in general practice is secured for the long-term and that the resources will therefore be made available to meet demand before it is too late.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Myres  
Chair  
RCGP Wales