

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/MD/1347/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

16 December 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding petition P-04-564 Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital.

I appreciate the Defence Committee does not support the changes that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has made to services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area. I have corresponded with the Hospital Defence Committee about their concerns on a number of occasions and my position remains that I will not reopen any matters which have been agreed locally.

The health board's decision to make these changes followed a formal public consultation and engagement process, and the decision to place the health board in special measures has no bearing on previous decisions relating to services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to meet with the Defence Committee to discuss this matter.

My officials have been in contact with the health board to discuss the Defence Committee's concerns with primary care and community services in the area, and have been assured that this is being addressed by expanding the range of services available locally. This includes the development of integrated services between medical, nursing, therapies and social care staff.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford @wales.gsi.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I understand that the health board has recruited an additional salaried GP who will take up post in the New Year to improve continuity of care for patients in this area.

The priority for the area continues to be the development of the new Blaenau Ffestiniog Primary Care Resource Centre, for which I will shortly be announcing capital funding of £3.94m. The scheme looks to develop the Memorial Hospital, and the new centre will deliver:

- An expanded range of local services provided from one site to include consultant led palliative care outpatients and specialist nurse clinics, consultant led respiratory outpatients clinics, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service family sessions;
- Improved children's services in a dedicated suite – more child and adolescent mental health services, provide a permanent midwifery base and antenatal clinics, increased paediatric speech and language sessions, consultant paediatrician and community paediatrician outpatient sessions, co-location of school nursing and health visiting services;
- The return of learning disability services to Blaenau with a regular consultant psychiatrist clinic;
- The introduction of Telemedicine to improve access to services, through the installation of a Technology Suite. This will enable a range of virtual outpatient clinics to be established across a number of specialties offering facility by video conference for remote prescribing, diagnosing and reviewing of patients. It will also facilitate teaching and tele-rehabilitation;
- A base for mental health and substance misuse with an increase in group sessions, and
- Community dental accommodation.

This is an exciting and positive development for the area which will benefit the local population, and I would encourage the Defence Committee to work with the health board going forward to ensure it comes to fruition as soon as possible.

I am aware that the Defence Committee met with the co-chairs of the Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative and I would also encourage the Committee to remain engaged since the Collaborative is developing innovative ways to engage with local communities in jointly planning services for their areas.

Yours sincerely
Mark Drakeford

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