

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JH-/00310/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

15 March 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 2 March regarding Petition P-06-1242 Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales.

Endometriosis is a condition which affects a significant number of women and, as the petition from Ms Hales highlights, the impact on quality of life can be huge and diagnosis can take a significant period of time. I am aware that, in spite of efforts to change things, there can still be a lack of understanding of endometriosis among some health professionals and that current provision sometimes falls short of what we, and service users, might expect.

Health boards have a responsibility to deliver high quality gynaecology services and it is vital they provide a robust and effective pathway, which includes early diagnosis, for the management of endometriosis in accordance with NICE guidance. The NICE guidance provides a clear pathway which lists the symptoms of endometriosis and directs healthcare professionals as to when a woman should be referred to a gynaecology service for an ultrasound or gynaecology opinion. Welsh Government officials wrote to health boards in August 2018 seeking assurance that services were being delivered in line with the NICE guidance on endometriosis and all health boards confirmed compliance.

The Women's Health Implementation Group (WHIG) was set up in March 2018 as a ministerially-directed group to consider reports into the use of synthetic tape and mesh sheets for stress urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse, endometriosis and fecal incontinence. Since its establishment, WHIG has been allocated £1m a year to support its activities. This funding has been used to establish a network of pelvic health and wellbeing coordinators in each health board, who are already playing a vital role in addressing

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales

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.

interlinking issues across areas of women's pelvic health and supporting women and sign posting them to appropriate services, including physiotherapy and pain management where appropriate.

More recently it has also allowed for the recruitment of a network of specialist endometriosis nurses in each health board to develop national pathways to help to reduce diagnostic times across Wales and again ensure women with the condition are fully supported whilst awaiting or undergoing treatment. I am aware that the Minister for Health and Social Services met with some of these nurses recently and was very impressed with their commitment and desire to improve outcomes for the women they are supporting.

The Endometriosis Nurses are actively spending time with patients in clinic and liaising with their Multi-Disciplinary Teams to improve the endometriosis service provision within their Health Boards. The Nurses are newly in post, with a big task on their hands to improve our pathways and have a positive outcome for our endometriosis patients. The Endometriosis Nurses are working together across Wales to establish best practice and learn from each other and to help shape a better future for the endometriosis pathways in Wales. We know the situation in Wales pre-covid was not where we wanted it to be and with the additional covid pressures, we have a demanding task on our hands, but one we are making inroads to resolve, which starts with funding for the Endometriosis Nurses and supporting them as they make a difference to clinical processes and spending time with patients to improve their quality of life.

In addition to the Endometriosis Nurses, WHIG has developed a dedicated website for patients and the Nurses to use; Endometriosis Cymru which includes 'living with stories' from Welsh people and a symptom tracker which has the potential to become a diagnosis tool for patients and clinicians to speed up intervention for early diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis. NHS Wales is moving in the right direction, with the support of WHIG and Welsh Government, we are continuing to be a catalyst for change and drive Wales's efforts to deliver a fundamental change in the way that the NHS supports women.

The WHIG has also launched the *Bloody Brilliant* campaign aimed at supporting young people experiencing periods and trying to break down taboos and encourage open conversation about what is a completely natural part of life.

I am aware that the Minister for Health and Social Services has recently announced that she will be publishing a women's health Quality Statement and a women's health plan later this year. These documents will set out how Welsh Government expects services for women's health to be delivered by health boards and also our aspirations to support women who need to access those services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

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