

Mike Hedges AC/AM  
Chair  
The Petitions Committee of the National  
Assembly for Wales

Direct Line: 0300 062 8377  
Fax: 0300 062 8387  
E-mail: [Kathryn.chamberlain@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Kathryn.chamberlain@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

By email: [SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales)

Eich cyf / Your ref  
Ein cyf / Our ref 19456

13 January 2017

Dear Mr Hedges

**RE: Petition P-04-564 Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital.**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 December 2016 relating to the above, seeking Healthcare Inspectorate Wales' (HIW) conclusions on health care in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.

I cannot provide a comprehensive view of the quality of health care in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, as we have not inspected all of the services in the locality. However I can offer a view on the work that we have completed, and also offer a view on the health board's response to HIW's letter.

HIW's most recent inspection to any healthcare service in the Ffestiniog area was an inspection of the Blaenau Ffestiniog Health Services Centre in November 2015. You can access a copy of the report relating to this inspection using this link: <http://hiw.org.uk/find-service/service-index/bcuhbmanagedpractice318?lang=en>

This inspection found that the majority of patients we spoke to rated their experience of the GP practice between good or excellent, however there were indications that the patient experience was affected by GP shortages and the use of GP locums. We also found that further work needs to be done by the health board, in collaboration with the practice staff, to identify and develop other key services for patients living in an area where high deprivation levels are prevalent. Furthermore we had 'concerns regarding the practice sustainability under its current climate and about the impact on patients'.

Further to this inspection, and following receipt of concerns raised separately by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, and a member of the Blaenau Ffestiniog Defence Committee raising regarding the quality of health care provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, HIW wrote to the health board in November 2016.

We wanted to understand how the health board addressed concerns such as those raised by the Defence Committee. In addition we wanted to know what steps has the health board taken with regards to public engagement, ensuring that it develops an approach and strategy to meet the needs of its population. Furthermore we asked how the health board is ensuring that in the meantime, patients in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area have an adequate level of local service provisioned for them.

The health board provided HIW with a comprehensive response describing the challenges facing the health board in meeting its aim of being able to care for more people at home or closer to home wherever possible avoiding the need for admission to hospital. It described several of the measures and initiatives put in place to assist it in achieving this aim, and provided some evidence of measures put in place to ensure satisfactory services are being provided in the meantime. We are therefore broadly assured that the health board has taken and is continuing to take appropriate steps in ensuring that the services it provides in the Ffestiniog area are adequate.

However it is clear that significant challenges remain for the health board in gaining the confidence of both the local and wider North Wales population; a key element of this challenge is the need for the health board to develop an overarching Clinical Services strategy for the medium to long term. The health board acknowledges the importance of developing any such strategy in conjunction with engaging effectively with its population.

We are currently in the process of devising our work programme for 2017/18 and as such the information received from the health board will inform our planning process. We are also shortly due to commence with the Wales Audit Office a joint follow-up review of governance arrangements at the health board. We are yet to revisit the Blaenau Ffestiniog Health Services Centre. As our inspection programme consists mainly of unannounced visit I hope that you will understand that I cannot share the details of this, however all inspection reports are published promptly three months after visit has taken place.

I trust that the Committee will find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely



**DR KATE CHAMBERLAIN**  
Chief Executive