

## Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Petition number: [P-05-0768](#)

Petition title: **A call for the return of 24 hour Consultant led Obstetrics, Paediatrics and SCBU (Special Care Baby Unit) to Withybush DGH.**

SWAT has fought for the retention of safe, effective and accessible secondary health care services for the people of Pembrokeshire since 2005. A previous petition failed to retain Consultant led Obstetrics, Paediatrics & SCBU at Withybush DGH. The Health Minister and Hywel Dda Health Board unjustly removed 24 hour Emergency Consultant led Obstetrics, Paediatrics & SCBU from Withybush DGH in 2014 and left the people of Pembrokeshire with an unsafe, inequitable and poorly accessible third class health option for, in particular, mothers, babies and children.

On behalf of SWAT and the people of Pembrokeshire I call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Consultant Obstetrics, Paediatrics & SCBU provision be immediately returned to pre 2014 levels. SWAT and the people of Pembrokeshire do not agree with the centralization of services onto the Glangwili site.

The Health Board was obliged to carry out Equality Impact assessments and these have clearly shown that a whole swathe of the most vulnerable in our society have been and are being put at risk by these changes. In particular the most vulnerable, the very young, pregnant women, the economically challenged and those with disabilities have been profoundly affected and continue to be. The Health Board have all this documented in their assessments but they seem to be unable or unwilling to find remedies for these issues.

I ask you to return services to the first class services they used to be. This would re-provide equitable, accessible, safe and sustainable services instead of the current arrangement which seriously disadvantages the most vulnerable people in Pembrokeshire.

NB: SWAT stands for the [Save Withybush Action Team](#).

The campaign group submitted a similar petition previously [P-04-431 : Against Health Cuts from the Residents of Pembrokeshire](#). The previous petition was first considered by the Assembly Petitions Committee on 6 November 2012, and was closed on 4 April 2017.

## Policy background

In 2012 Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) released a [consultation on potential service change across the region](#), which included plans to centralise neonatal services at Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen. There was considerable opposition to the proposals, which were subject to legal challenge, as outlined below:

- The issue of centralisation of neonatal services in Hywel Dda UHB was subject to judicial review in summer 2014; but in July 2014 Hywel Dda UHB's consultation to improve and sustain healthcare across Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire was upheld as fair and lawful by a High Court Judge;
- The UHB was party to two other Judicial Review applications brought against the then Minister for Health and Social Services in the same hearing. The second related to neonatal care at Withybush Hospital in Haverfordwest. Both cases were similarly refused.

## Subsequent developments

The planned changes to services were implemented from August 2014, and in November 2015 the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health published a [review report](#) into women and children's services in Hywel Dda UHB.

The report states that the review group found 'no clinical sense in reversing the major decisions of reconfiguration made one year ago'. The report also set out that:

Despite a strong public lobby which expressed concern about the changes, we see no clinical case for reverting to stand alone hospital provision. We acknowledge that some families have reported harrowing experiences due to additional travelling time and uncertainty about the need for transfers but we did not see evidence of any worsened outcomes in maternity or paediatric care as a direct result of the reconfiguration. There had been improved compliance with national and professional service standards and although more work is needed to consolidate the staffing and systems we see a strong future for a single service increasingly integrated across two sites.

The UHB supported the recommendations of the report at its [meeting in November 2015](#) and agreed an action plan at its [January 2016 meeting](#). The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport in January 2017 approved £1.209 million for Hywel Dda University Health Board to develop a full business case for the [second phase](#) of improvements to maternity and neonatal services at Glangwili hospital, which is currently being developed.

## Temporary changes to Paediatric Ambulatory Care Unit at Withybush hospital

In November 2016 Hywel Dda UHB announced a [temporary reduction](#) of the opening hours of the Paediatric Ambulatory Care Unit at Withybush Hospital due to staff shortages, which was reported in the [media](#).

On [13 June 2017](#) the issue of the temporary removal of overnight paediatric care in Withybush was raised in Plenary. The First Minister stated:

We know that the health board will be going out to consultation before long with specialists in the area in order to secure sustainable services. But it's true to say that this is temporary, and not permanent.

## **Additional background information**

[Independent scrutiny panel reports on the proposals for service change \(2013/14\)](#)