

Vaughan Gething AM
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services

21 March 2018

Dear Vaughan

GMS Systems Framework Contract Procurement

I am writing further to your letters of 27 February 2018 to all Assembly Members regarding the procurement process for GP systems in Wales, and 15 March 2018 in response to my correspondence on this issue.

As you are aware, following the announcement of the GMS Systems Framework Contract Procurement result on 29 January 2018, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee received concerns from the Royal College of General Practitioners Wales (RCGP Wales) and individual GPs about EMIS Health Ltd (EMIS) being unsuccessful in its bid to continue to provide GP system services in Wales.

On 7 March 2018, the Committee took evidence from representatives of the RCGP Wales and the General Practitioners Committee Wales (GPCW) on this issue, in order to explore the rationale for the contract award and to hear more about the concerns of GPs.

The procurement process

As we understand, the contract specification drawn up by the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) as part of the tendering process was largely based on the current contract being delivered by EMIS and Vision Health Ltd. In our evidence session, Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of GPCW outlined to the Committee



the procurement process. She told us that each of the three suppliers who bid for the contract were provided feedback after the first stage of the tendering process, where the minimum requirements that needed to be met in order to be awarded the contract were clearly set out. Once invited to formally submit tenders, it is clear that EMIS chose not to meet some of the minimum standards required.

Dr Jones explained to the Committee the significant concerns with the bid submitted by EMIS which are also set out in the joint letter from NWIS, GPCW and the Programme Board which you helpfully provided to Assembly Members within your correspondence on this matter. The key areas for concern were identified as:

- EMIS Health Ltd would not commit to the required service levels and resolution of system problems
- EMIS Health Ltd reserved the right to charge extra and defer delivery of a number of core functional requirements
- EMIS Health Ltd reserved the right to reject requests for any future changes in the system
- EMIS Health Ltd imposed restrictions on NHS Wales' ability to manage the supplier to deliver the required availability and performance.

We have been made aware that EMIS had the opportunity as part of the procurement process to challenge this decision during a 10 day cooling off period following notification to the suppliers. However, EMIS did not make any representations and contacted GP practices to inform them that they were 'saddened' by the decision but would continue to support the software until such a time that migration has happened.

We therefore conclude this is a purely commercial decision taken by EMIS not to meet the requirements within Wales, and agree with Dr Jones' view that this was not a problem with the specification set, or by the Board tasked with making the final decision.



We also regret that individuals have come under attack as a consequence of the decision reached not to award the contract to EMIS, the current provider for many GPs in Wales. We understand that legal restrictions within the process meant that communication with GPs was constrained during the 10 day standstill period, which will have undoubtedly contributed to the strength of feeling around this matter.

Impact on GPs

We heard from Dr Rebecca Payne, Chair of RCGP Wales about the potential impact to GP practices. You will be aware of these particular areas of concern as outlined in Dr Payne's letter to you on this issue, which includes giving practices financial support, staffing support, comprehensive staff training and setting a practical timetable for migration.

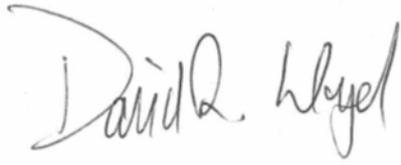
We acknowledge the challenge now faced by GPs in the significant undertaking of changing suppliers and recognise RCGP Wales's view that practices should receive the support they need to minimise any potential disruption to patient care as a priority. In her evidence to us, Dr Jones reassured us that a comprehensive package of support, before, during and after migration will be put in place for practices which will cover financial, contractual and administrative support. We are aware of the difficulties that occurred when practices migrated to EMIS a few years ago so want to ensure that adequate support is put in place to avoid repeating this situation. I therefore ask that you provide the Committee with further details of the package the Welsh Government will be providing to facilitate these changes.

You will be aware that a Stakeholder Reference Group has been established to help develop the support package, I would also ask that you provide us with regular updates as the migration process advances.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards





Dr Dai Lloyd AM
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

