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University Health Board

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David J Rowlands AM  
Chair  
National Assembly for Wales  
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Via email:  
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Dyddiad / Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018

Dear Mr Rowlands,

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

Further to your recent letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 enclosing a short report summarising the Petition Committee's consideration of the petition and requesting the Health Boards views on the two conclusions you have reached, please find our comments as follows:

**Petitions Committee Conclusion 1:** It is clear from our consideration of this petition that further efforts to build bridges between sections of the local community and BCUHB are required. The opening of Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog could help to provide an impetus for this. However, we recognise that this Centre has not addressed the underlying motivation behind the petition, namely the provision of inpatient beds, minor injuries cover and X-ray facilities in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Nevertheless, it is our hope that the new Centre can assist in the development of improved relationships and satisfaction with the level of healthcare provided within the community.

As you are aware, Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog, the new integrated health, social care and wellbeing centre in Blaenau Ffestiniog was formally opened by the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Services, on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

The new Centre is delivering over 35 new, increased and existing regular services from the centre and over 45 clinics across the spectrum of primary, community health, social care, prevention and wellbeing. Informal feedback from patients, the public and staff to date has been very positive. It is a priority for the Health Board to ensure that the new facilities deliver what has been promised. The expectation is that service provision will evolve and develop over time in line with Welsh Governments strategic policy and the Health Boards Care Closer to Home Strategy and that the Health Board will continue to make the centre available to new and additional services where appropriate.



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Developing improved relationships with the local community is important to us and to this end we have implemented an extensive engagement and communication exercise over the past 12 months via the West Area's Engagement and Communication Officers. This has included a number of engagement activities locally in Blaenau Ffestiniog and regular newsletters and updates have been circulated widely and including via social media. Communication with the local community in the Blaenau Area does not stop with the opening of Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog. The Health Board recognises the importance of continued engagement with local communities and a draft Engagement and Communication Plan has been created for the Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog for the next 12 months and beyond.

As stated previously and in line with Welsh Government guidance associated with All Wales capital funded schemes, we will be undertaking a post project evaluation of the Blaenau Ffestiniog capital scheme before the end of 2018 (required by Welsh Government within 12 months of opening), with the aim of assessing the benefits and outcomes against a range of measures set out in the approved business case. This will include undertaking specific patient and carer satisfaction surveys with local services. We will also be re-visiting the Equality Impact Assessment of the new Centre in due course to assess the impact of the new Centre on protected characteristic groups.

The Health Board is also pleased to confirm that there have been a number of new appointments over recent months within the GP Practice including a second salaried GP, a new Health Centre / Practice Manager, a new experienced Advanced Nurse Practitioner, new Practice Nurse and the Health Care Support Worker is currently undertaking training to enable her to take on enhanced duties. In addition, a local person has been employed as an apprentice in reception and administration work. This full team is able to take advantage of the benefits of co-location with a wide range of health and social care professionals, as well as accessing third sector organisations all on the same site.

In terms of the statement that this Centre has not addressed the underlying motivation behind the petition, namely the provision of inpatient beds, minor injuries cover and X-ray facilities in Blaenau Ffestiniog, the Health Board has always endeavoured to underline clearly in meetings and correspondence with the Hospital Defence Committee, as well as being detailed within the Health Care in North Wales is Changing (HCiNWIC) documentation, the principles and reasons behind the changes in community service provision across North Wales and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The two key principles being:

- Focusing our resources on providing **reliable healthcare services at fewer hospitals** to make sure that the services provided are consistently available;
- **Providing the same healthcare services with the same opening times within 40 minutes'** drive for as many people as possible in North Wales;

In addition we have explained that focusing resources on providing reliable healthcare services at fewer hospitals is very important to ensure that throughput is higher, ensuring competences are maintained and care is safe.



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The reasons as to why Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital (FMH) was not chosen as one of the ten community Hospital hubs across North Wales (in HCiNWiC) have been explained. An analysis of admissions showed that the catchment area for FMH was confined largely to Blaenau itself, with a low level of admissions from the area to the West and little or no activity from the east or the “rural uplands” area. Whereas admissions data for Ysbyty Alltwen showed that it already drew patients from a broader catchment area. The patient throughput numbers for both MIU and X-ray were higher in Ysbyty Alltwen than for Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital. The difficulties of maintaining staff skills and competences with low throughput are well documented.

It is now a widely accepted cornerstone of UK, Welsh Government and BCUHB strategic health policy that patients should be cared for in their own homes rather than admitted to hospital, where this is safe and appropriate to do so. The inpatient service change in Blaenau reflects this principle. People at the end of life are choosing to die in their own homes and this change is borne out by the increasing palliative care workload of district nurses particularly in the Blaenau area over the last few years. These patients would previously have been cared for in an inpatient setting.

**Petitions Committee Conclusion 2:** We consider that the local scrutiny process now ongoing through Gwynedd Council’s Care Scrutiny Committee represents the most appropriate route for the issues covered by the petition to be discussed and addressed. We endorse the recommendations reached by that Committee and urge all involved to give them careful consideration. In particular we agree that the concerns of the local community may be best addressed by the recommendation for an independent report to be commissioned into health provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.

BCUHB will continue to work closely with Gwynedd Council’s Care Scrutiny Committee to provide information as and when required. As set out in the Health Board’s original response to the Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations, BCUHB re-iterates that it would not be appropriate for it to commission and fund an independent report on the provision of health services in the Blaenau area. The priority for us is to ensure that the new integrated facilities in Blaenau deliver what has been promised in line with Welsh Government and BCU’s Care Closer to Home vision.

At the most recent Care Scrutiny Committee meeting, it was suggested that the North Wales Community Health Council might be best placed to undertake this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Doherty'.

**Gary Doherty**  
**Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive**