

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/01133/18

David John Rowlands AM
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National Assembly for Wales
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Dear David,

Thank you for your further letter of 5 October regarding Petition P-05-732 about A&E waiting times at Wrexham Maelor Hospital. As requested I am providing an update on the outcome of the NHS Wales Delivery Unit's (DU) intensive support programme in respect of Wrexham and Glan Clwyd hospitals.

I should explain at the outset that the DU's intensive support programme focussed on improving the health board's escalation processes and the use of the Welsh Government's Risk Based Escalation (RBE) tool rather than intending to directly improve performance, though it was anticipated that improved executive grip may result in more general improvements.

The DU commenced its intensive support programme with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board on 25 April 2017 at the request of the Chief Executive of NHS Wales and provided a total of seven months on-site support (averaging 2-3 days per week) up to the end of November 2017. This saw the Delivery Unit work with the health board's executive triumvirate, wider Executive and moving through the organisation to cover Gold, Silver and Bronze on call and the ward and operational ED staff to embed an improved awareness and understanding of escalation processes. Following the conclusion of this work and with mutual agreement, the DU stepped back to allow the health board to progress this work through its broader improvement programme.

Unfortunately, the health board continues to face significant challenges across its sites and despite improvements in the timeliness of ambulance handovers since the beginning of the year, it has not been able to demonstrate the sustained improvement in respect of emergency department waiting times. This was particularly evident over the winter period when an increase in the number of patients requiring emergency admission to hospital, as well as difficulty in sending people home from hospital beds resulted in some patients waiting longer for access to care.

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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.

I have been very clear with the health board about the need to increase the pace of improvements and in my Written Statement, published on 1 February 2018, I updated Assembly Members on the health board's progress against the expectations set out in the special measures improvement framework and set out additional support for the health board under the special measures arrangements.

This support will help the health board build on progress made and ensure delivery and improvements in mental health services and in its finance and performance positions and include:

- the appointment of David Jenkins, previous Chair of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board in an advisory role on board governance and performance progress;
- BCUHB to appoint a Turnaround Director and team to deliver and increase pace on actions;
- increased primary care leadership and planning capacity and capability to be put in place; an action plan progressed to deliver on the Deloitte Review recommendations;
- additional support to extend management infrastructure in place for mental health team, and
- allocation of £13.1 million committed from within performance funding to improve waiting times and £1.5 million invested in an unscheduled care programme.

I have since published a special measures improvement framework that sets out the milestones and expectations for the health board for the next 18 months in leadership and governance, strategic and service planning, mental health and primary care, including out-of-hours services. I expect the health board to provide detailed progress reports against the new improvement framework and the first report will be provided in October this year.

The committee will also be aware that Peter Higson, chair of the health board will be stepping down in August and that Mark Polin, currently Chief Constable of North Wales Police will take up the role of chair in September. Mr Polin will bring a wealth of public sector leadership and governance experience, which will stand him in good stead to lead the next critical phase of the health board's improvement journey.

Monitoring and oversight of the health board will continue at a heightened level and I will continue to provide ministerial oversight with monthly accountability meetings with the chair and the chief executive.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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