

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 17 Gorffennaf 2018

Petitions Committee | 17 July 2018

Petition number: P-05-826

Petition title: Pembrokeshire says NO!! to the closure of Withybush A&E

Text of petition: We the undersigned are calling on the Welsh Government and Hywel Dda Health Board to reverse their decision to downgrade our county hospital and to remove our A&E.

The Hywel Dda Health Board has proposed drastic changes to how hospital services are provided in West Wales. They propose a downgrading of our county's Withybush general hospital and Carmarthenshire's Glangwili general hospital, both to community hospital standard and a new general hospital to be built around the Whitland area. But this also means that we will no longer have a fully functioning A&E department within our county as it will be replaced by a minor injury unit at the Withybush site. In doing so patients who require emergency care in our county will be faced with travelling for up to an hour, possibly even more if you live in our county's more rural areas just to have that life saving emergency care in a hospital that will be outside the county. A timescale that not only is putting Pembrokeshire lives at risk but doesn't even factor in that added time of having to wait for an ambulance to get to where the patient may be, stabilising the patient, then transporting that patient to a hospital that is beyond the borders of our county. Crucial minutes lost in a situation where time is already not on your side.

Background

Hywel Dda Health Board launched its formal public consultation on its proposals for changing the way health services are provided across the health board on 19 April 2018 '[Our Big NHS Change: Consultation document](#)'. The consultation will run for 12 weeks until 12 July 2018. The Health Board will make a decision on how to proceed later in 2018.

The Consultation has [three proposals](#) which aim to move more services out of hospitals into communities and provide care where possible in patients' own homes. In all three proposals:

- Bronglais District General hospital will continue to provide services for mid Wales.
- A new hospital will be built near the Carmarthenshire–Pembrokeshire border including an A&E unit.
- There will be 10 community hubs, providing a range of health and care services including some treatment that used to be done in hospital.

Under all three proposals, Withybush hospital in Haverfordwest would be downgraded from a district general hospital. The proposals are that Withybush general hospital will become one of a network of community hospitals.

Community hospitals will provide non-medical beds (for people who need a little more treatment than they can have at home); treatment for minor injuries; tests including scans and midwife led services.

Discussions in Plenary

The potential downgrading of Withybush hospital and the related consultation are issues that have been raised on a number of occasions in recent months during Plenary. It has been [noted](#) that as a result of the plans, more patients in Pembrokeshire will need to travel further for health services which could have an impact on communities across the county.

Most recently in [June 2018](#), concerns were raised that each option offered as part of the consultation leads to the downgrading of Withybush hospital with no option to safeguard the services offered. In response to these concerns, the Welsh Government noted that a wide-ranging consultation was taking place and that the options had been developed with 'doctors, nurses and staff, people who provide care, representatives of patient groups and their partners'. It was also highlighted that it is vital that people express their opinions about the future structure of the services in west Wales.

During [Plenary](#) in May 2018, an Assembly Member stated that they had been informed of low awareness of the Health Board's consultation and that it could have been made more accessible. The need for the Health Board to engage openly was seen as important. The Welsh Government responded by saying that it acknowledged the need for the Health Board to recognise where people are not being reached and would be willing to discuss any improvements that could be made to how the Health Board engages with the public.

Problems with out-of-hours doctors in the Hywel Dda Health Board area was raised by an Assembly Member in [May 2018](#) and it was also noted that as a result of this more pressure could be placed on A&E services. This could subsequently be an issue if the A&E department is taken away from Withybush hospital. The Welsh Government confirmed that it had succeeded in attracting doctors to the Ceredigion and northern Pembrokeshire area and it

would expect Hywel Dda to continue to attract more doctors to ensure that there is a sufficient number of doctors available out of hours.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.