

# P-05-914 Equal access to health care for the disabled

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 19 Tachwedd 2019  
Petitions Committee | 19 November 2019

Reference: RS19/10865-4

## Introduction

**Petition number:** [P-05-914](#)

**Petition title:** Equal access to health care for the disabled

**Text of petition:** We call on the Welsh Government to ensure that it is a legal requirement for all GP surgeries to have wide, adjustable treatment beds and hoists available for the use of disabled patients, so that they can be examined whenever there is need.

I was born with Spinabifida in 1970 and as a survivor of this condition I am paralysed from above the waist down and use a wheelchair full time. In 2017 I was diagnosed with stage 4 bladder cancer. It cannot be legally proven but it is my sincere belief that had I been examined earlier in the years before in my GP surgery on an a wide, adjustable treatment bed, perhaps with the aid of a hoist, then my cancer would not have been diagnosed at such an advanced stage. Since I've been looking into this issue, many disabled women have spoken to me about how they do not have equal access to



smear tests because of this issue too. Often people think that disabled access is just about lifts and ramps but in health care, it is so much more complex. Let's join together to make access to health care equal for all people.

## Background

The relevant guidance in Wales (*General medical practice premises, 2017*) notes that consideration must be given to the requirements of the Equality Act in terms of both design and future operation of primary healthcare premises, but also says:

It should be noted, however, that whilst the Act gives legal protection to disabled people against discrimination, it does not make explicit what constitutes discrimination in terms of standards in the built environment.

The guidance states that careful consideration should be given to the external areas and approaches to the building, with particular attention to disabled, elderly and infirm patients and visitors, and includes reference to disabled parking spaces. However it does not mention accessible consultation/treatment rooms (with hoists etc) for disabled patients.

The guidance does specifically set out considerations that should be given for bariatric patients and adults with learning disabilities:

GPs and health boards should consider provision for bariatric patients and adults with learning disabilities. This will depend upon local circumstances. These patients will require additional facilities over and above normal provision. The client should consider the use of one treatment room with specialist lifting equipment, either built into the building structure or provided as a mobile hoist, for these patient groups. The room should be flexible to allow for both groups of patients and for any specialist equipment. The treatment room should also include an en-suite toilet to allow for privacy and dignity.

## Welsh Government response

The Welsh Government refers to the *General medical practice premises in Wales 2017* design guidance, and quotes the above section which states that GPs and Health Boards should consider provision for bariatric patients and adults with learning disabilities.

The Welsh Government goes on to say:

All patients should have equitable access to healthcare services and health boards should work to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate patients if they have specific needs due to disability. It remains the responsibility of Health Boards to plan how services will be delivered 'on the ground.' This includes the commissioning and regular review of GP services to ensure the needs of the resident population are met.