



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00234/20

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

14 February 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 24 January regarding Petition P-05-926 to provide a chronic fatigue department in Wales and seeking information on the Chronic Fatigue Steering Group.

The group to which you refer is the ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia Advisory Group, chaired by Owen Hughes (Consultant Counselling Psychologist and Head of Pain and Fatigue Management Service at Powys Teaching Health Board). Representatives of pain services from each health board are on the group, including the head of the ME/CFS clinic in North Wales. The group includes GP representation and colleagues from Public Health Wales. In addition to NHS colleagues, the third sector and patient voice were represented by the Welsh Association of ME & CFS Support and Action for ME.

This group's initial remit was to implement recommendations from a ME/CFS Task and Finish Group report in 2014 but subsequently developed into a more formal advisory group. The group considered issues such as digital support and patient experience and its last action was to commission an exercise to seek assurances from health boards as to the current provisions in place and their approach to improving services for ME/CFS in the short and longer term.

Many of the issues faced by those living with ME/CFS are common to other conditions and our approach moving forward is to amalgamate the advisory groups relating to pain, musculoskeletal conditions, fibromyalgia and ME/CFS. These conditions face many commonalities over a range of areas, including the need for patient and professional education, effective diagnosis, self-management techniques and prevention. This approach has received an overwhelmingly positive response from members of all the groups affected and the first meeting of the new Long Term Pain and Musculoskeletal Conditions Advisory Group will be convened in the summer.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

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.

In addition to the aforementioned advisory groups, my officials have instigated numerous meetings with various patient support groups, such as ME Support in Glamorgan and Fibrofighters, to engage a wider range of views. They have also held regular discussions with Health Education and Improvement Wales to further consider how education for healthcare colleagues can be improved, and engaged with specialist clinicians based external to Wales with a specific interest in ME/CFS.

Regarding the concerns raised by Dr Shepherd, I would like to clarify that the suggestion that there are no ME/CFS hospital based services in Wales is not correct. These may not be specialist CFS/ME clinics (with the exception of North Wales where there is a specialist CFS/ME centre based in North East Wales) but patients are seen in pain clinics throughout Wales by health care professionals with significant knowledge and expertise in this area.

I trust this information is helpful and look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Committee in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services