



Ein cyf/Our ref EM/00568/23

Mx Ceri Willcox

clerk@glynneathtowncouncil.gov.uk

20 March 2023

Dear Mx Wilcox,

Thank you for your letter, addressed to the First Minister of Wales, on behalf of Glynneath Town Council regarding emergency care services in the Swansea Bay University Health Board area.

The NHS in Wales continues to work extremely hard to make each patient's experience a positive one by delivering safe and timely access to health and care services. However, we have been open about the challenges NHS Wales staff and services are experiencing, and we acknowledge emergency care access times are not where we, NHS Wales nor the public would want them to be.

In light of the need for a whole system approach to drive improvement, last year we published the [Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care Policy handbook 2021 - 2026](#), our five-year strategy to drive a whole-system transformation of access to urgent and emergency care. This document sets out our strategic plans, and our expectations of health boards, NHS trusts and regional partnership boards in Wales to ensure individuals accessing the urgent and emergency care system, for mental or physical health – or social - concerns, receive the appropriate response, in the right setting, at the right time resulting in optimal outcomes and a better experience for all.

These goals span the entire health and care system and seek to deliver the most effective and appropriate response to people's needs in all health and care settings – including in their own homes - through:

1. Coordination, planning and support for people at greater risk of needing urgent or emergency care;
2. Signposting to the right place, first time;
3. Access to clinically safe alternatives to hospital admission;
4. Rapid response in a physical or mental health crisis;
5. Optimal hospital care following admission;
6. Home-first approach and reduce risk of readmission.

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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.

We are investing £25m annual funding to drive local, regional and national transformational change to urgent and emergency care services through delivery of these goals and increase staffing capacity in crucial parts of the system to help people access care as close to home as possible, and only spend time in hospital when necessary. We have already made significant investment in new ways of working, such as urgent primary care centres and expanding same day emergency care services to reduce pressure on emergency and urgent care and the wider system.

In 2022/23 Swansea Bay University Health Board has received £2.96m to support delivery of its local Six Goals improvement programme, including extending same day emergency care (SDEC) services at Morriston Hospital, and the implementation of two urgent primary care centres in the region.

A further £2.7m has been made available for health boards to improve their emergency department environments and help improve the experience of people waiting for emergency care and treatment this winter. Swansea Bay University Health Board has received an allocation of £265,000 to enable improvements to be made to the emergency department waiting area at the Morriston Hospital.

A national Optimal Hospital Care and Home First programme has also been established to support health boards and regional partnership boards to improve patient flow and discharge practices and better manage people in the community, enabling people to return home from hospital when they are ready and freeing up bed capacity in hospitals.

All health boards have committed to work with local authorities and partners to develop plans to increase community bed or bed equivalent capacity ahead of the winter period and support people to return home or to their local communities with the support they need. These plans will deliver additional step down to recover provision and community responses and as a result of this joint endeavour across health and social care, more than 650 extra community beds and care packages have been secured, with plans to deliver more over the coming months.

This additional capacity will be delivered alongside additional measures to boost the community care workforce and is a key element of our enhanced winter planning approach. It will support people to return home or to their local communities when ready and as a consequence it should improve timeliness of care in other parts of the urgent and emergency care system.

Given the significant challenges the Welsh ambulance service has been experiencing and the impact on emergency ambulance response times, a national ambulance improvement plan has been developed and agreed by NHS Wales chief executives. This plan has been supported by £3m Welsh Government funding to deliver a wide range of actions to support better management of 999 demand in the community, increased ambulance capacity, improved responsiveness to people with time sensitive complaints and ambulance patient handover. All health boards have also worked with the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust to develop handover improvement plans for each of their emergency departments, to improve patient experience and outcomes, and free up ambulance capacity to respond to urgent calls in the community.

I hope this provides your members with assurance on the actions being taken by Welsh Government to support NHS Wales organisations to improve urgent and emergency care services across all parts of Wales. However, I hope you will understand that while I have a role, as Minister, to set the strategic direction for health and care services in Wales and hold the NHS to account, it remains the responsibility of each health board to work with partners to plan and deliver services at a local level to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the communities they serve. This includes ensuring the clinical model, configuration of services and facilities are fit for purpose and provide equity of access to deliver the very best care to all patients.

I would, therefore, encourage you to raise any specific concerns regarding the provision of health and care directly with Swansea Bay University Health Board using the following details: [Complaints/Feedback - Swansea Bay University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#)

You may also wish to know that a network of Community Health Councils (CHCs) exists in Wales. CHCs provide free, confidential advice and support to patients who have a problem with, or complaint about, NHS services. Contact details for Swansea Bay CHC are available [Get Help - Swansea Bay Community Health Council \(nhs.wales\)](#).

[I hope this information is helpful.](#)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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