

P-06-1227 To get a specialist mental health mother and baby unit in North Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 13.01.22

Dear Committee,

The reason I started this petition was to get a Mother and baby unit in North Wales and to make a difference for mothers and families in North Wales following my experience. This is a very much needed service needed covering Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, and potentially areas of Mid Wales Powys and Ceredigion. In my opinion this is a very large area and a big demand with the population in all of these counties. With 1 in 5 women experiencing difficulties with their mental health during and after pregnancy this shows the demand that is needed for treatment and potential hospitalisation for mothers.

It's good to hear that the Welsh Government is committed to ensure a Mother and Baby provision for mothers who live in North Wales and the importance of this service and specialist support the mothers need for themselves and their babies close to home and their support network of family and friends. But the possible unit going to be located in North West England is disappointing which means that there will be only one Mother and baby unit still in Wales located in Swansea, and the impact and importance of this service is evident in Swansea and the surrounding area. This means that mothers with their baby and family and friends will still have a distance to travel to North West England covering all of North Wales counties and possible mid Wales counties, also with not considering the need for the service in North West England which would mean that the beds in a unit would be quickly filled with a mix of English and Welsh patients with possible England patients given priority.

From looking at the MBU units in the UK there is a national shortage of beds already so mothers are already travelling around the UK away from their families and friends. It is very important to have loved ones close when in crisis which I have been through myself and my main reason for starting this petition with my experience of a hard time for me and my family and distance was a strain on us all and for me needing my family in an emergency situation was very traumatic and I'm sure that many families go through this also and is a huge stress for all involved. This would mean also that the English Government would need the funding from the Welsh Government for the cost of care of a Welsh patient in an English hospital.

I am also worried that the service being available in Wales in an English hospital and whether this promise will be kept, with my experience is very important and I believe it is essential for a Welsh speaking individual in a crisis situation where I prefer my first language at times of mental health situations especially when I'm talking about my true feelings and needs at this time. I'm sure that other individuals in my situation would prefer to speak Welsh as well.

In my personal situation if we decide to have any more children, I was advised by doctors in Manchester to go to a unit before a second baby is born so they can observe my health on the later half of the pregnancy. With me being high risk with having bipolar the risks involved were known in my first pregnancy and I was under perinatal care which didn't go to plan as the care coordinators were off sick and no other professionals were available so it shows that a unit is in desperate need in the area. There is room on half of the Ablett ward at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Bodelwyddan known as Tawel Fan. This has not been used for a

number of years. Without this service in North Wales a great strain is added to families involved and also a great strain is put on the MBU units in the location which has a bed (if available). To be sent to a unit somewhere in England the baby would be born in an English hospital. We and others would prefer to be in a Welsh hospital for a Welsh birth certificate and i'm sure this is understandable for our Welsh heritage and preference of a birthplace. I'm sure anyone who lives in Wales in this situation would prefer to be in Wales so with the only a Mother and baby unit in Swansea, South Wales this would not be a option for North and Mid Wales families due to distance.

So in conclusion there is a urgent need for a Mother and baby unit in North Wales for many families and I would not like to see other families go through the difficulties which we did in 2019. I hope that 2022 will be a year of change for Perinatal Mental Health Care in North Wales, and as I mentioned above the lack of beds across the UK which I believe the UK Government needs to ensure more beds for mothers in crisis at a time of need due to mental health complications during and after pregnancy giving support and high standards of care at a difficult time for mothers and their families. It appears obvious that the care isn't and hasn't been in place for a number of decades and that is why you can't see enough evidence for demand to have a standalone unit in North Wales. To say that, why is there a unit in Swansea, that may as well have been placed in Bristol!!

I have had lots of support and messages and individuals backing me and sharing stories while I was sharing the petition on Facebook and Instragram. Also having media attention and coverage BBC Wales, S4C, BBC radio Wales, Radio Cymru, Free press Denbighshire, Daily Post North Wales and recently ITV Wales all of who are supporting me and I'm still in contact with and are waiting for your response to this petition. And backing of MP'S and three charities NSPCC, APP (Action on Postpartum Psychosis) and Ftww (Fair Treatment for the women of Wales) who are very supportive of this petition and also agree with me in the points that I have raised in this email and the petition itself.

So I please ask you the Committee to think and understand my reasons for starting this petition and all the points in this email and consider for this to go to the Senedd for the discussion it deserves.

Kind regards,