

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd, Llesiant a Chwaraeon
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-768
Ein cyf/Our ref VG/01383/17

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

6 July 2017

Dear David,

I am writing following the letter of 22 May regarding Petition P-05-764 from the Save Withybush Action Team (SWAT) regarding reinstating 24-hour Consultant-led Obstetrics, Paediatrics and SCBU (Special Care Baby Unit) at Withybush Hospital.

I note the issues raised in the petition. These are matters that have been raised in the chamber with me on a number of occasions.

The Welsh Government and Hywel Dda University Health Board are fully committed to the future of Withybush Hospital and have made it clear that it will continue to play an important role in the provision of services for people in Pembrokeshire.

I am assured that obstetric and maternity services across the health board area are safe, and this is reflected by nationally recognised studies.

In 2014, the health board concentrated consultant-led obstetric and paediatric services at Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen. The changes were made to improve compliance with national clinical standards for maternity and neonatal care, ensure that clinicians handled enough cases to maintain their skills and to maintain its status as a training provider in obstetrics, paediatrics and gynaecology. In preparation for the changes the health board undertook a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment. This is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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

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.

The changes have been independently reviewed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) on two occasions. These have confirmed that the services are safe and sustainable, and have led to improved patient outcomes. There is also better compliance with national clinical standards.

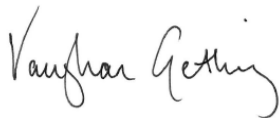
In its 2015 review of the impact of changes to maternity, neonatal and paediatric services in Hywel Dda, the RCPCH stated “we did not see evidence of any worsened outcomes in maternity or paediatric care as a direct result of the reconfiguration”.

The changes to neonatal services were also challenged by means of Judicial Review in 2014 when the Court ruled that all aspects of the decision taking procedures adopted by both the health board and Welsh Ministers were fair and lawful.

Hywel Dda University Health Board routinely monitors data on rates of perinatal mortality and stillbirth for both local review and submission to a number of Wales and UK-wide audits. The latest available data demonstrates perinatal mortality rates in the health board area are comparable with other UK units of comparable birth numbers.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Vaughan Gething'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd, Llesiant a Chwaraeon
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport