



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/03296/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair
Petitions Committee
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24 June 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 19 May on behalf of the Petition Committee regarding introducing a separate ward other than maternity ward for families going through a Miscarriage.

Miscarriage at any stage of pregnancy represents the loss of a baby and the hopes and dreams held. Early miscarriage often occurs either at home or within gynaecology services. Support would be provided by primary care and signposting to relevant support organisations such as the Miscarriage Association <https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/> would be provided at this time. There would also be outreach from community midwifery services if the woman is already under their care.

In the event of late miscarriage, care would be provided by local maternity services which is an appropriate setting in later pregnancy. Health boards in Wales have been working proactively to ensure bereavement rooms are in place to provide privacy and follow up bereavement support is in place which supports not only the parents but wider family members. It is a time of bereavement that affects the whole family and in respect of this we are committed to ensuring the best services for women and families

Often the loss of a baby especially in early pregnancy cannot be presumed and is only identified during routine early scanning procedures. Health boards and staff strive to disclose this information to women and partners in appropriate settings but often the infrastructure of hospital premises would mean taking them through clinical settings to an appropriate private area.

At the end of last year, my officials wrote to health boards seeking assurances that they are operating their miscarriage services in accordance with guidelines set out by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG). The responses indicated that services were being offered in an appropriate manner.

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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.

However, there is always room for improvement and my officials will continue to work with health boards to ensure best practice in service provision.

My officials established a Bereavement Support Working Group in 2019 in order to ensure that there was adequate support for families who experience the loss of a baby or child. The membership consisted of charities, support organisations and officials. In December 2018, a bereavement services scoping study was published by Cardiff University in conjunction with Marie Curie and the Wales Cancer Research centre on behalf of the End of Life Care Board. The study mapped existing support, ranging from signposting through to specialist counselling, and identified areas where further resourcing is needed. The study can be accessed at:

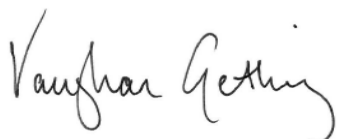
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-12/scoping-survey-of-bereavement-services-in-wales-report.pdf>

The scope of the study covered the broad range of bereavement support, including that for children and young people. It highlighted the gaps and challenges in bereavement support, and raises a number of considerations for service development. These are centred on the need to develop a national framework for bereavement care in Wales. This would then facilitate investment in bereavement support at organisational and regional levels and provide equity and access to appropriate levels of support responsive to local need.

The national clinical lead for end of life care, Dr Idris Baker, has been asked to establish a National Bereavement Steering Group to take this work forward. The existing Bereavement Support Working Group will be merged into the National Bereavement Steering Group, thereby ensuring that organisations supporting children, young people and those affected by baby loss and sudden death are all represented. To address the gaps in bereavement service provision, the Welsh Government will make an additional £1m available for bereavement support from 2021-22. This will provide time to enable the national bereavement framework and the pathways, training and standards that will follow to be developed.

Thank you again for writing to me on this matter. I hope you have found my reply helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AS/MS

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