

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/ VG/2195/18

Dr Dai Lloyd AM
Chair
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

26 June 2018

Dear Dr Lloyd,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May seeking an update on the actions Welsh Government is taking in respect of Out of Hours (OOHs) services in Wales.

I understand that the Chair of the Royal College of GPs in Wales has requested that the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee 'undertake an inquiry into ways to improve OOH provision' but that before you make a decision, you wanted clarity on what action was being taken by the Welsh Government.

The OOHs services in Wales have faced several new challenges over the last few months, and officials are working with the NHS to find ways to bring about improvements. I am grateful for this opportunity to update the Committee on the work that is being undertaken in developing services in the out of hours period.

I met with Dr Payne in April and discussed a number of proposals. Officials followed this up and met with Dr Payne and her RCGP Wales colleagues more recently, and continue to have regular discussions. Dr Payne also participated in a clinical summit on 24 May relating to unscheduled care. I am pleased that the RCGP is willing to work jointly with the Welsh Government to bring about change.

We are rolling out the 111 programme in Wales, which will improve the service offered to people with urgent care needs OOHs. The 111 service will provide a national framework and greater consistency for patients, which is fundamental to modernising OOHs care. You will recall I made a written statement on the *Evaluation of the 111 Pathfinder Service in Wales* on 5 April 2018. The evaluation provided us with strong evidence that 111 offered significant benefits for patients; and I committed to supporting the NHS roll-out over the next 2-3 years. The roll out is to be underpinned by significant investment in a bespoke IT solution that will be available across all seven LHBs by autumn 2020.

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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.

I recognise the need for leadership around the OOHs agenda, and as such Judith Paget, Chief Executive, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, will take up the lead executive role. Adding OOHs to her portfolio of primary care and 111, makes strategic sense and will provide a driver for more strategic direction and pace. A newly formed working group met for the first time on 21 June and I am looking to this group to be able to provide advice on what action is needed to drive forward necessary improvement.

Improving the quality of the OOH service is crucial, and I am pleased that a peer review process for OOHs is being developed which builds on the *NHS Wales Peer Review Framework: July 2017*. Work is underway to convene a series of peer review panels with the health boards over the next few months which will focus action in specific areas. These reviews will be clinically led with a review of evidence and discussion and will culminate in an agreed local action plan.

Earlier this year, the Directors of Primary, Community Care Mental Health were asked to work together and develop an all Wales action plan to address the challenges facing OOH services. The action plan is being supported by the 111 team, and work to realise these proposals is being undertaken in preparation for next winter.

In the broader context, work is well advance in the development of the 'Transformational Model for Primary Care', which will offer primary care services 24/7. The key to this is to better support the MDT approach to care and to encourage a more GP led rather than GP managed service. As this develops further more details will be shared.

Finally, I wanted to alert you to a series of scrutiny reviews and reports relating to OOHs in recent months. The NHS Delivery Unit provided Welsh Government with an all Wales report into performance against the OOH standards at the mid point in the year. The Welsh Board of Community Health Councils recently published a report into the OOHs services.

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) also produced a series of individual LHB reviews into OOHs services. These were provided to LHBs in 2017 and have been considered through their usual governance processes. Alongside this, the WAO have recently concluded their all-Wales review and are shortly to publish a report into *Primary Care Out of Hours Services*. This later report is likely to be scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

You, and the Committee, may feel it is an appropriate time to review OOH services. However, I would ask that you consider the range of work that has been/is being undertaken and wait until the PAC has considered the latest report before deciding. I would welcome your view.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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