

Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AM

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

Our ref:

Your ref:

Jonathan Morgan AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd CF99 1NA
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg: 0845 010 4400
Ffacs: 029 2089 8131
E-Bost:Gohebiaeth.Edwina.Hart@cymru.gsi.gov.uk

Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA
English Enquiry Line: 0845 010 3300
Fax: 029 2089 8131
E-Mail:Correspondence.Edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Dear Jonathan

ADULT NEUROSCIENCE REVIEW

On the 11th January 2011 in Plenary, you raised a number of issues with the Minister for Business and Budget following my letter to Assembly Members on the progress with the Adult Neuroscience Review (6th January 2011).

I do not intend making an Oral Statement in response, but wanted to reassure you, and Members, that the statements I made in my letter were factually correct.

STAFF TRANSFERS

The agreement reached between Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board involved the transfer of two consultant neurosurgeons from Morriston to Cardiff. This took place in July and September 2010.

REPLACEMENT CONSULTANT NEUROSURGEON

Following the retirement of a consultant neurosurgeon at the end of December 2010, the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the Health Board) and Cardiff University have decided to appoint to a Professorial Chair, rather than to a straight replacement. This will build the reputation of the new Department and is supported by all the consultant neurosurgeons. Such an appointment will help to ensure that the neurosurgery service in Wales does not falter, particularly in terms of future recruitment, teaching and research.

INTERVENTIONAL NEURORADIOLOGY

The Health Board has an establishment of 2WTE interventional radiologists. It is the case that one of the postholders left in 2010, but your comment that '*...there has been no effort to replace him...*' is incorrect. These efforts have included an advertisement for a locum consultant, but this has attracted no applicants. The Health Board is also proceeding with an advertisement for a substantive replacement.

In December 2010, as a result of short term staffing issues, the Health Board called on an agreement already in place with Bristol to provide interventional neuroradiology support. Three patients were referred to the Bristol service during that period (December 2010) and the Health Board has advised Bristol that from this week it no longer requires its support.

Joint working between specialist centres is good clinical governance, and the Cardiff and Bristol centres have a longstanding joint working relationship. It is also worth noting that the Cardiff and Swansea centres work well together on general neuroradiology and support each other accordingly.

The support provided to the Health Board by Bristol was not related to plans to centralise surgery, nor was it related to functioning of operating theatres and the appointment of vital clinicians. This support was called on to ensure that the three patients were not adversely affected by the absence of a consultant.

The Health Board has reassured us that it is committed fully to sustaining and strengthening the University Hospital of Wales neurosurgery service and the investment made, both in capital and revenue terms, is testament to this. The forthcoming professorial appointment is designed to take the service to the next level in terms of reputation and sustainability. Effective working with other specialist centres, like Swansea and Bristol, is also part of building that sustainability and represents good clinical governance.

I have discussed this matter with the Chief Executive NHS Wales and we are both satisfied that the information provided to us by the Health Board is accurate and reliable.

I am copying this letter to all Assembly Members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. J. ...', written in a cursive style.