



5<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Ms Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair –Petitions Committee  
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## **P-06-1350 Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital**

Dear Ms Thomas,

Once again the petitioners have asked me to forward further observations to your Committee from the Community Hospitals Association. This follows the petitioners' receipt of a copy of the letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2024, from the Chief Executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), to the Petitions Committee, and LLAIS arranging a Public Forum in November 2024, which I attended.

### **STRUCTURAL FAILING**

This saga has now continued for some 21 months. With respect, I have to say that the complacency shown by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to correct the healthcare service deficiency is astounding! It is now amongst the worse examples of health authority failed management in a community hospital setting that the Community Hospitals Association has experienced.

The failing does not appear to be an isolated example. In the last few weeks, Audit Wales has reported via a "Structured Assessment of BCUHB". It concludes "ongoing instability within the BCUHB Executive Team, gaps in wider senior leadership structures, and ongoing challenges with the operating model are compromising the Health Board's ability to tackle the significant challenges it faces".

The Welsh Government statistics NHS "Activity and Performance Summary Report" to end 2024, shows BCUHB underperforming the rest of Wales in almost every category. The Health Board remains in special measures of course, but questions perhaps need to be asked by Senedd members as to why it consistently fails to recover? Is there a management style in BCUHB, that seeks to park a problem like that in Tywyn, rather than to solve it? Does the Board scrutinise service "not spots" thoroughly enough to make a difference?

### **STAFFING CHALLENGES**

Informal contact with staff throughout the BCUHB area indicates that the population in the centre and west of BCUHB's area simply does NOT contain enough staff with appropriate qualifications to fill the vacancies. Workforce planning will remain an unrealistic pipe dream unless significant effort is made to recruit out of area. Overseas recruitment has confirmed the need but has been insufficient to solve the problem.

It is possible to recruit out of area to a pleasant place to live! The BBC featured the success of Bishops Castle community hospital recruiting out of area and reopening their ward some six months ago, in the



same period that Tywyn ward has been without its inpatients. Their solution had been to retain a recruitment agent in the West Midlands and for the local authority to assign an appropriate staff member to ensure that family relocation issues were addressed and made easy.

At the LLAIS public forum in Tywyn in November I asked which recruitment agent out of area, BCUHB had retained and was told by the BCUHB management present, “none”. I asked a County Councillor present whether Cyngor Gwynedd has identified a person to address relocation issues and was told, that the County Councillor didn’t believe so.

#### COMPLACENCY

The BCUHB letter to the Petitions Committee of 23<sup>rd</sup> December suggest that the community is “managing”. The residents present at the LLAIS meeting would not agree. Medical literature supports the residents. Frail persons sent out of their community to recuperate receive far less community visitors and encouragement and are much slower to recover. No measurement appears to have been made in Tywyn as to whether the BCUHB informal Tuag Adre service produces rehabilitation results to approach those attainable from a local community hospital based pathway.

The BCUHB letter to the Petitions Committee of 23<sup>rd</sup> December also proposes, after more than 20 months, “another shuffling of the pack” that MIGHT produce a “safe and sustainable” model of care. BCUHB does not promise to achieve a standard of patient outcomes that would stand scrutiny. There appears to have been no involvement of HIW or Public Health Wales in the analysis of the Tywyn challenge or in the search for an equitable solution.

There was little purpose in the Senedd passing the laudable 2014 Health and Wellbeing Act when the principles enshrined in it are so easy forgotten at the Health Board level. We trust that your committee can find some method of encouraging NHS Wales to live up to its responsibilities and to take credible action to restore service to the Tywyn area. We seek your committee’s continued support.

Yours sincerely

Tom Brooks

**Committee Member**  
**Community Hospitals Association**