

Our ref: NB/LJ/MA



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Sent by email: Ms Alexandra Howells, Alexandra.howells@wales.nhs.uk

Dear Ms Howells

Annual Letter 2016/17

Following the recent publication of my Annual Report I am delighted to provide you with the Annual Letter (2016/17) for **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board**.

Overall my office's caseload has increased by 13% this year, with public body complaints seeing a 3% increase.

Once again there has been a further rise in the percentage of health complaints, from 36% to 38%.

As expected most complaints about the health sector related to Clinical Treatment in Hospital whilst there has been a drop in the number about Clinical Treatment Outside Hospital for the second year running.

It is concerning that of the seven health boards, compliance with the timescales for providing my office with evidence that agreed recommendations had been completed varied from 53% to just 33% provided within the targets set. My office will be looking closely at compliance levels over the coming year.

During 2016/17, I produced six public interest reports and one 'special report'. All but one of the investigations were health related and worryingly, three of the cases were against the same hospital – Ysbyty Glan Clwyd run by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The special report, issued against Hywel Dda University Health Board for failing to implement my recommendations following an early resolution, was the first of its kind against a health board, but underlines the need to comply with commitments made through early resolution in the same way as I would expect for recommendations arising from upheld complaints.

The remaining public interest report related to a local authority's role in overseeing the savings of looked after children.

Earlier this year I issued a thematic report entitled [Ending Groundhog Day: Lessons from Poor Complaint Handling](#). This highlighted cases from across devolved public services in Wales where investigations by public bodies have been inadequate and failed the service user. The report emphasised the need for effective governance across the Welsh public sector, robust staff training and improved methods of data collection. If you have not considered the report I would encourage you to do so.

In June my office held a seminar for the health sector on complaint handling. The seminar brought together complaints staff from health boards and trusts across Wales to share their experiences and best practice in complaint handling. The main outcome of the day was support for the establishment of a complaint handling network similar to that seen in Scotland, and we hope to see this established over the coming months.

I continue to place importance on the improvement function of my office. Last year I assigned Improvement Officers to several bodies and this will continue in 2017/18. In engaging with these bodies we hope to see ongoing improvements in complaints handling, learning and putting things right, along with the governance arrangements necessary for continuous improvement.

I am hopeful that the National Assembly will shortly be introducing new Ombudsman legislation that will help drive up standards. It is important Wales continues to adopt best practice in complaint handling and public service improvement and does not get left behind.

In reference to your Health Board the number of complaints dropped this year from 126 to 94, and it is even more encouraging to see that the number taken forward to investigation dropped from 44 to 26. Clinical Treatment in Hospital saw the most number of complaints (55). There were 24 cases upheld this year compared to 17 in 2015/16. PSOW intervention was required in 39% of cases, which was the second highest of all the Health Boards.

During 2016/17 my Improvement Officer (IO) continued to meet regularly with your liaison officer and the Director of Nursing and Deputy Director. They believe they have a productive working relationship, and have been grateful for advance warning of some topical issues which the Health Board has and upon which we may expect contact from members of the public.

My IO has also met quarterly with the Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer of the Community Health Council, and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales' relationship manager for ABMU. They receive the papers for the Quality & Safety Committee and the Assurance & Learning Group, and have attended as many of the Assurance & Learning Group meetings as they can as well as the occasional Committee meeting.

They welcomed the opportunity to contribute to training which has been held for complaint handlers, and have been involved in sessions for individual Service Delivery Units as well as for some GP practice managers. They also visited the Princess of Wales Hospital to meet with members of the PALS team there; they found this particularly interesting, and were able to gain some insight into the varied work which they do and how this helps to resolve "complaints" at the earliest possible opportunity, reducing the overall number of formal complaints.

My IO is very glad to be able to report that the number of complaints which we received about ABMU was significantly lower than last year, a reduction of some 25% on last year's figure. You will find below a factsheet giving a breakdown of complaints data relating to your Health Board. This year we have included a new set of statistics regarding Ombudsman interventions. These include all cases upheld by my office as well as early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

This correspondence is copied to the Chair of your Health Board for consideration by the Board. I will also be sending a copy to your Contact Officer within your organisation and would again reiterate the importance of this role. Finally, a copy of all annual letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Bennett

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

CC: Andrew Davies, Chair

Christina Page, Contact Officer

Factsheet

A. Complaints Received and Investigated with Health Board average adjusted by population

Health Board	Complaints Received	Average	Complaints Investigated	Average
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	94	115	26	31
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	90	127	26	35
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	192	151	61	41
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	91	106	26	29
Cwm Taf University Health Board	76	65	23	18
Hywel Dda University Health Board	113	84	23	23
Powys Teaching Health Board	20	29	0	8

B. Complaints Received by Subject with Health Board average

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	Complaints Received	Health Board Average
Complaints Handling – Health	5	9
Health - Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures	7	5
Health - Clinical treatment in hospital	57	56
Health - Clinical treatment outside hospital	5	6
Health - Continuing care	6	7
Health - Medical records/standards of record-keeping	2	1
Health – Other	10	8
Health - Patient list issues	2	1

C. Comparison of complaint outcomes with average outcomes for health bodies, adjusted for population distribution

Health Board	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	'Other' cases closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	Early Resolution / Voluntary Settlement	S16 Report - Upheld - in whole or in part	Other Report Upheld - in whole or in part	Other Report - Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	13	22	21	2	18	0	24	7	0	107
Health Board Average (adjusted)	14	22	30	2	21	1	20	6	0	116

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

Health Board	Number of cases with PSOW intervention	Total number of closed cases	% of cases with PSOW intervention
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Board	42	107	39
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	29	95	31
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	91	194	47
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	23	93	25
Cwm Taf University Health Board	24	71	34
Hywel Dda University Health Board	37	102	36
Powys Teaching Health Board	4	24	17

Appendix

Explanatory Notes

Section A compares the number of complaints against the Health Board which were received and investigated by my office during 2016/17, with the Health Board average (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

Section B provides a breakdown of the number of complaints about the Health Board which were received by my office during 2016/17 with the Health Board average for the same period. The figures are broken down into subject categories.

Section C compares the complaint outcomes for the Health Board during 2016/17, with the average outcome (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period. Public Interest reports issued under section 16 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 are recorded as 'Section 16'.

Section D provides the numbers and percentages of cases received by the PSOW in which an intervention has occurred. This includes all upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on the enclosed information, including suggestions for any information to be enclosed in future annual summaries. Any feedback or queries should be sent to lucy.john@ombudsman-wales.org.uk or matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk