

Our ref: NB/MA

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To: Chair of Health Board  
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board

## Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board

Following the recent publication of my [Annual Report](#) I am delighted to provide you with the Annual Letter (2017/18) for **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board**.

The number of health complaints coming to my office and the variance in health board performance in complaint handling continues to be a concern. Whilst we have seen a welcome 2% reduction in the total number of complaints, complaints against health boards have increased by 11% from 676 in 2016/17 to 747 in 2017/18. As a result, my office organised two special seminars; one for health bodies in jurisdiction on health complaints and best practice in June 2017; and another on complaint handling culture for all public services in February 2018. At the latter event, I was very pleased to see further progress on Out of Hours services with the Rapid Response for Acute Illness Learning Set (RRAILS) project improving out of hours services in health boards across Wales, partly in response to my office's thematic report, "Out of hours: Time to care", on the subject.

Four [public interest reports](#) have been published in the past year. All were health related. Whilst none of the reports were issued against your Health Board the cases raised issues which provide learning points for all health boards in Wales. I therefore urge the Board to consider whether any of the systemic failures identified in those cases provide opportunities for the Board to review and improve its service provision.

As you are aware, a new Public Services Ombudsman Bill has been introduced by the National Assembly and is currently at the second stage in the legislative process. This means that Members have agreed the general principles of the Bill

and a Financial Resolution was agreed in Plenary on 17 July 2018. It is important that Wales continues to adopt best practice in complaints handling and public service improvement, and this new legislation would help drive up public service standards. If the Bill progresses I will be engaging with public bodies in Wales in preparation for the introduction of the new powers within the Bill.

### **Complaints Received – Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board**

The number of complaints received in 2017/18 about Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, was 121. While the figure remains slightly below the Welsh average (adjusted for the Health Board's population), this is an increase of 29% from the previous year (2016/17), which is of concern.

Also, the number of complaints investigated by PSOW in the past year is 37, significantly higher than the 26 in 2016/17.

The **subjects** of complaints about the Health Board broadly reflect the Welsh average, with complaints generally being about appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures, continuing care, patient list issues and other miscellaneous issues.

The number of complaints received regarding clinical treatment in hospital has increased substantially by 49% from 57 complaints in 2016/17 to 85 in the past year. Many of these complaints are about complaint handling.

We identify that the **services** which receive the highest number of complaints are A&E (8), Nursing (7), General Medicine (7) and Care of the Elderly (including Dementia) (6).

### **Complaints Closed – Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board**

The total number of complaints closed between April 2017 and March 2018 for Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board was 101. 27% of these prompted an intervention by PSOW. These include upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

12% of cases with the Health Board were settled either via early resolution or voluntary settlement. No public interest reports were published regarding the Health Board. However, 15% of the complaints closed were upheld in whole or in part, with only 7% of cases not upheld following investigation.

Of the 15% upheld cases, 6 were upheld against Morriston Hospital, 5 were upheld against the Princess of Wales Hospital and 4 were upheld against Cefn Coed Hospital in Care of the Elderly (including Dementia). I suggest that the Board reflects upon the apparently disproportionate number of complaints I have upheld for a hospital of Cefn Coed's size.

For all health boards, agreed timescales for providing my office with evidence that agreed recommendations have been implemented were not met in 36% of cases in 2017/18. For Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, this occurred in 35% of cases. Whilst this is on a par with the general position in

Wales, as a third of my recommendations are not implemented on time I consider this is an area in which the Health Board should improve. As I share draft recommendations with public bodies for comment before they are finalised I expect any concerns about them to be raised with my office at an early stage, before a report on an investigation is finalised. Once I have issued my final report and bodies have formally agreed them, I expect public bodies to implement agreed recommendations in full and in a timely way.

I and my Improvement Officer recently met and discussed with you and your Director of Nursing the possibility of a pilot project to help reduce the number of complaints coming to my office from ABMU. I hope that we can progress this over the weeks ahead. I have copied this letter to your Contact Officer within your organisation and would reiterate the importance of this role.

**Action for the Health Board to take:**

- Present my annual letter to the Board to assist Board Members in their scrutiny of the Board's performance;
- Consider whether there are any learning points from the rise in complaints against your Health Board and the rise in those which require investigation by my office;
- Consider whether there are any learning points from the systemic failures identified in the public interest reports (in respect of other health boards) I issued during 2017/18;
- Review the complaints I have upheld against Cefn Coed Hospital to see whether any learning can be gained from these cases;
- Work with my Improvement Officer to improve complaints handling, particularly in the parts of your Health Board that generate most complaints **about complaint handling**;
- Improve your performance when complying with any recommendation I have made to improve your service delivery.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Health Board, your Director of Nursing and your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all annual letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely



Nick Bennett  
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

CC: Chief Executive  
Contact Officer

## Factsheet

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

Health Board	Complaints Received	Average	Complaints Investigated	Average
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	121	127	37	44
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	121	140	43	49
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	186	167	70	58
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	94	118	33	41
Cwm Taf University Health Board	74	71	32	25
Hywel Dda University Health Board	109	92	38	32
Powys Teaching Health Board	42	32	8	11

### B. Complaints Received by Subject with Health Board average

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	Complaints Received	Average
Complaint Handling- Health	5	12
Health - Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures	3	4
Health - Clinical treatment in hospital	85	62
Health - Clinical treatment outside hospital	10	7
Health - Continuing care	8	8
Health - Non-medical services – food, cleanliness etc	1	0
Health - Other	5	6
Health - Patient list issues	1	1
Various Other - Other miscellaneous	2	2
Various Other - Recruitment and appointment procedures	1	0

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

<b>Local Health Board/NHS Trust</b>	<b>Out of Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Premature</b>	<b>Other cases closed after initial consideration</b>	<b>Early Resolution/voluntary settlement</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>Other Reports- Not Upheld</b>	<b>Other Reports Upheld - in whole or in part</b>	<b>Public Interest Report</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB	20	14	33	12		7	15		101
Health Board average (adjusted)	20	13	30	20	1	9	18	1	111

**D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention**

<b>Health Board</b>	<b>No. of complaints with PSOW intervention</b>	<b>Total number of closed complaints</b>	<b>% interventions</b>
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	27	101	27
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	31	94	33
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	70	175	40
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	32	81	40
Cwm Taf University Health Board	24	65	37
Hywel Dda University Health Board	40	104	38
Powys Teaching Health Board	4	31	13

## **Appendix**

### **Explanatory Notes**

Section A compares the number of complaints against the Health Board which were received and investigated by my office during 2017/18, 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 2017/18 with the 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 2017/18, with the average outcome (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

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 [catrin.wallace@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:catrin.wallace@ombudsman-wales.org.uk) or [matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)