

Our ref: NB/CW/MA

Ask for: Matthew Aplin

 01656 641150

Date: 15 October 2018

 communications
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

To: Chair of Health Board
Cwm Taf University Health Board

Annual Letter 2017/18

Following the recent publication of my [Annual Report](#) I am providing you with the Annual Letter (2017/18) for **Cwm Taf 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 saw a welcome 2% reduction in the total number of complaints, those against health boards increased by 11% from 676 in 2016 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. As you are aware, one of those reports was issued against your Health Board. My report identified serious failing in your complaint handling because it took more than three years to provide a final response to the complaint and there was a lack of transparency in your investigation. If it has not already done so, I urge the Health Board to reflect upon my findings and act positively on my recommendations to improve services. Although the other public interest reports were issued against other health boards I also 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 will be 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 with the general

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principles of the Bill and a Financial Resolution was agreed 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 – Cwm Taf University Health Board

The number of complaints received in 2017/18 about Cwm Taf University Health Board was 74. This represents a slight decrease from 2016/17, when we received 76 complaints, complaints continue to be above the Welsh average (adjusted for population).

Despite the number of complaints **received** remaining similar, the number of complaints about Cwm Taf University Health Board which were **investigated** by PSOW increased from 23 in 2016/17 to 32.

The **subject** of complaints about the Health Board broadly reflects the Welsh average, with complaints generally being about appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures, continuing care and clinical treatment outside hospital.

We identify that the **services** which receive the highest number of complaints are General Medicine (5) and Obstetrics and Gynaecology (4).

Complaints Closed – Cwm Taf University Health Board

The total number of complaints closed between April 2017 and March 2018 for Cwm Taf University Health Board was 65. 37% of these prompted an intervention by PSOW. These include upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements. As this proportion of interventions is high I consider that the Health Board should work to resolve more complaints at a local level.

15% of cases with the Health Board were settled through either early resolution or voluntary settlement. 20% of the complaints closed were upheld in whole or in part, and 13% of cases were not upheld following investigation.

Of the 20% upheld cases, 6 were upheld against Royal Glamorgan Hospital, 3 were upheld against Prince Charles Hospital and 3 were upheld against Ysbyty Cwm Cynon. As outlined above, one public interest report was issued in respect of your Health Board.

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 Cwm Taf University Health Board, this occurred in 23% of cases. I am pleased to note the improvements the Health Board has made in providing more timely compliance with my recommendations. However, I consider that this remains an area in which the Health Board could improve further. 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 recommendations in full and in a timely way.

Improvement officer engagement

I have been very pleased with the way in which your staff engaged with my Improvement Officer last year. We saw evidence of a cultural change in the way in the Health Board views complaints, with a keenness to engage with my staff and learn from complaints. The Board embraced the closer involvement of my Improvement Officer, with senior clinicians and nursing staff welcoming a presentation on the Board and its relationship with my office. The Health Board's performance in providing timely responses to request for information has improved, as has timely compliance with my recommendations (as outlined above). This is welcome and positive progress.

I have therefore decided that I no longer need to assign an Improvement Officer to work specifically with your Health Board. Please be assured that my office will provide further support to your complaint handling staff if that is requested. Please pass on my thanks to your staff for their co-operation and positive engagement with us.

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;
- Reflect upon my findings in the public interest report I issued about your Health Board and act positively upon my recommendations to improve services;
- 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;
- Work to reduce the number of cases which require intervention by my office;
- Continue to improve your performance when complying with any recommendations I have made to improve your service delivery.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of the Health Board and to your Contact Officer within your organisation and would 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: 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

Cwm Taf University Health Board	Complaints Received	Average
Complaint Handling - Health	8	12
Health - Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures	3	4
Health - Clinical treatment in hospital	48	62
Health - Clinical treatment outside hospital	3	7
Health - Continuing care	7	8
Health - Other	1	6
Health - Patient list issues	1	1
Various Other - Other miscellaneous	2	2
Various Other - Rudeness/inconsiderate behaviour/staff attitude	1	1

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

Local Health Board/NHS Trust	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/voluntary settlement	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld - in whole or in part	Public Interest Report	Grand Total
Cwm Taf University Health Board	11	5	16	10		9	13	1	65
Health Board average (adjusted)	11	7	17	11	0	5	10	0	62

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

Health Board	No. of complaints with PSOW intervention	Total number of closed complaints	% interventions
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 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 or matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk