

Our ref: NB/MA

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To: Chair of Health Board
Hywel Dda University Health Board

Annual Letter 2017/18

Following the recent publication of my [Annual Report](#), I am delighted to provide you with the Annual Letter (2017/18) for **Hywel Dda 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 2016/17 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. As you are aware, one of those reports related to your Health Board. My report identified serious failings in relation to a patient who suffered a cardiac arrest and died after staff failed to correctly diagnose and manage his heart failure. If it has not already done so, I urge the Board to reflect upon my findings and act positively on my recommendations to improve services. Although the other public interest reports related to other health boards, I would 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 the general

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 - Hywel Dda University Health Board

The number of complaints received in 2017/18 about Hywel Dda University Health Board was 109, a slight reduction since 2016/17 when PSOW received 113 complaints.

Despite the reduction in complaints **received**, the number of complaints about Hywel Dda which were **investigated** by PSOW increased from 23 in 2016/17 to 32 in the 2017/18.

The **subject** of complaints about the Health Board broadly reflect the Welsh average, concerning issues such as appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures, clinical treatment outside hospital, continuing care and medical records.

However, I would draw your attention to the fact that complaints regarding the Health Board's handling of complaints have increased by 93%, from 15 complaints received in 2016/17 to 29 in 2017/18.

We have identified that the **services** which receive the highest number of complaints are Trauma and Orthopaedics (6) and A&E (5).

Complaints Closed - Hywel Dda University Health Board

The total number of complaints closed between April 2017 and March 2018 for Hywel Dda University Health Board was 104. 38% 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.

22% of cases about the Health Board were settled either via early resolution or voluntary settlement. 15% of the complaints closed were upheld in whole or in part, with only 6% of cases not upheld following investigation.

As outlined above, I issued one public interest report about the Health Board.

Of the 15% of cases that were upheld, 5 were upheld against Glangwili General Hospital, 5 were upheld against Prince Philip Hospital and 4 were upheld against Wilybush General Hospital.

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 Hywel Dda University Health Board, this occurred in 63% of cases. This remains of significant concern, as this issue has been raised previously by my assigned Improvement Officer. She has expressed concerns about timely compliance repeatedly with your officers, including when she was invited to speak at your Operational Board meeting on 22 September 2017. This delay in compliance has, worryingly, been highlighted more recently resulting in my having to give consideration as to whether a “section 22” special report might be warranted. I wrote to your Chief Executive regarding this on 5 September 2018, requesting an urgent meeting. Notwithstanding the delay, I note that we are now to meet to discuss this and other matters on 16 October 2018.

In relation to complaints I have fully investigated, 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.

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 against your Health Board and positively act upon my recommendations to improve services;
- Consider whether there are any learning points from the systemic failures identified in the other 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;
- Work with my Improvement Officer to improve complaint handling, particularly in the parts of your Health Board that generate most complaints **about complaint handling**;
- 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 your Health Board and to your Contact Officer. I 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 large, sweeping flourish above the name.

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

Hywel Dda University Health Board	Complaints Received	Average
Complaint Handling - Health	29	12
Health - Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures	3	4
Health - Clinical treatment in hospital	55	62
Health - Clinical treatment outside hospital	5	7
Health - Continuing care	5	8
Health - Medical records/standards of record-keeping	1	1
Health - Other	6	6
Health - Patient list issues	1	1
Various Other - Other miscellaneous	4	2

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
Hywel Dda University Health Board	24	10	22	23	2	6	16	1	104
Health Board average (adjusted)	14	9	22	14	0	6	13	0	80

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