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28 August 2024

Dear James

## Temporary Changes to Minor Injury Unit Services in Powys

Thank you for your email of 27 August 2024 regarding the period of engagement from 29 July 2024 to 8 September 2024 on temporary changes to Minor Injury Unit services in Powys.

Firstly, particularly given recent patient stories, it is essential for me to reinforce that **community hospitals in Powys do not provide acute care**. Instead, they provide those services that it is safe and appropriate to offer in a rural community setting including treatment for minor injuries.

They do not have the staffing and equipment to treat medical emergencies.

Whilst Minor Injury Unit nurses *will* try to provide first aid help if a patient presents with a problem that is not a minor injury, attending a Minor Injury Unit can cause a dangerous delay to receiving essential time critical care that cannot be provided in this setting. And these risks are increasing because we frequently need to close Minor Injury Units in the evening and overnight at short notice because trained staffing is not available.

For medical emergencies and life and limb-threatening injuries the Health Board's clinical advice remains to call 999 or go to A&E.

You may have seen that the health board has been seeking to reinforce this vital safety message through our digital and social media channels in recent days to reduce the risk that patients attend a Minor Injury Unit with life threatening illnesses or injuries. I would be very grateful for your help in sharing this critical message.

## MIU Staffing Arrangements

The NHS has in place a payment scale called Agenda for Change that aims to ensure fair pay between roles and organisations. As a legacy issue, Emergency Nurse Practitioners in Powys Teaching Health Board had been evaluated as Agenda for Change Band 6 role, whereas in other health boards these roles had been evaluated

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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth Gymraeg  
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We welcome correspondence in Welsh  
Powys Teaching Health Board is the operational name of  
Powys Teaching Local Health Board

as Agenda for Change Band 7. The health board received a request from staff for re-evaluation of their roles. This was undertaken in accordance with our workplace policies, which reflect the national Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions. The outcome of this re-evaluation was that these roles should be remunerated at Band 7. This is now being implemented.

I am happy to confirm that we are not “creating a new post of a Band 8 Project Officer to oversee the transition in hours at the MIUs”. Instead, we are strengthening clinical leadership across the full range of urgent and emergency care services, both in relation to our own direct service provision but also for our pathways of care with ambulance services and neighbouring A&E departments. This role forms a key part of our delivery of the Welsh Government “Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care” ambitions, and is funded through the Welsh Government national programme ([Six Goals UEC - NHS Wales Executive](#)). The postholder will have a vital role working with staff, patients and communities to design the future of safe and sustainable urgent and emergency care for the people of Powys – and I hope that the establishment of this vital role gives further reassurance that these changes are indeed temporary in nature, as the critical work to develop and agree the future shape of urgent and emergency care is ongoing.

Our period of engagement with the public focuses on changes that may affect how and where patients access PTHB services – specifically, temporary changes to the opening hours of Minor Injury Unit services in Llandrindod Wells and Brecon. Alongside those changes, we have also taken the opportunity to review the Minor Injury Unit staffing model across Powys so that it has better alignment with activity and demand. As these changes do not affect how or where members of the public access PTHB Minor Injury Unit services, or our continued ability to meet national quality and performance standards, adjustments to the staffing model do not represent a service change and therefore do not form a substantive part of the engagement with the public and external stakeholders. Notwithstanding this, we have ensured that our engagement materials make clear that we are reviewing the staffing model (<https://www.haveyoursaypowys.wales/temporary>).

### **Impact Assessment of temporary changes**

Integrated impact assessment is taking place and importantly this is an ongoing process. A key purpose of this period of engagement is to take account of the issues we have heard from patients, communities, staff and partners so that we can update the integrated impact assessment before decisions are made regarding implementation. The integrated impact assessment will therefore be published within the papers for the meeting in public of the Board on 10 October 2024, and it is on the basis of this updated integrated impact assessment that the Board will be asked to make a decision regarding implementation of these proposed temporary changes.

Any operational matters, such as in relation to fire management, will form part of the implementation plan if the temporary changes are approved.

## **Overview of MIU Activity**

Our clinical team has reviewed Minor Injury Unit activity across the full year 2023/24, and continues to keep this under review. We are confident therefore that this represents an appropriate assessment of Minor Injury Unit use including during the overnight period.

All patients receiving treatment at the Minor Injury Units are recorded in our data. Patients are encouraged wherever possible to call prior to attendance, in order that the clinical team can offer immediate first aid advice and ensure that the patients are directed to the most appropriate place of care. Where patients are suitable for Minor Injury Unit care, they will be directed to attend accordingly, and their attendance will be appropriately recorded on our systems. Our patient system also records data on the number of patients who attend a Powys Minor Injury Unit who are then referred to District General Hospital for further diagnosis or treatment:

- In 2023/24, during the overnight hours (8pm to 8am) approximately one patient per week is referred from Brecon or Llandrindod Wells Minor Injury Unit to DGH.
- In 2023/24, during the daytime hours (8am to 8pm) approximately 1-2 patients per day are referred from Brecon or Llandrindod Wells Minor Injury Unit to DGH.

## **Financial Impact of Temporary Changes**

A key purpose of the current engagement is to review and revise the proposals for temporary changes, listening and learning from the feedback we receive. This feedback will contribute to the financial impact assessment that will form part of our papers to the meeting of the Board on 10 October 2024.

This means that any financial impact assessments are provisional and subject to change, but our interim analysis indicates there could be a cost saving of circa £250,000 per annum associated with temporary changes to opening hours and to the staffing model.

## **Impact on Neighbouring Health Services**

We have well-established working relationships with Welsh Ambulance Service University NHS Trust (WAST) and with neighbouring district general hospitals in both England and Wales.

On average there is less than one attendance per night overnight at Llandrindod Wells Minor Injury Unit and 1-2 attendances at Brecon Minor Injury Unit overnight. The majority of these could be seen when the MIU next opens. This is because MIUs see people with low to moderate injuries, and their conditions can normally be managed with home first aid (including online or telephone advice from NHS 111 Wales) until the Minor Injury Unit is next open. Patients attending MIU overnight who need x-ray services already need to be asked to return the next day as there

are no feasible options for providing 24-hour x-ray services in our sparsely populated setting given the low demand and specialist skills and training required.

As now, for medical emergencies and life and limb-threatening injuries the Health Board's clinical advice remains to call 999 or go to A&E. Whilst Minor Injury Unit nurses *will* try to provide first aid help if a patient presents with a problem that is not a minor injury, attending an Minor Injury Unit can cause a dangerous delay to receiving essential time critical care that cannot be provided in this setting.

WAST and neighbouring hospitals are aware of these proposals, and particularly given the low numbers of patients attending PTHB Minor Injury Units overnight they have assured us that this proposal would not cause undue additional pressure on their services.

### **Timetable for Decision-Making**

The overall proposed timetable for these temporary changes was reviewed with Llais at our mid term review meeting earlier this month. As an outcome of that review we jointly agreed to extend the closing date to 8 September, and also to arrange an additional meeting in public of the Board on 10 October to consider the issues that have been raised during the engagement period. The key purpose of this meeting will be to make decisions on whether to implement the temporary changes based on conscientious consideration of the engagement feedback.

If approved by the Board, the temporary changes are expected to come into effect by early November. However, the timetable for any changes would be more clearly set out in the papers to Board.

I hope that this information has been helpful, and thank you again for any help you can give to reinforce that Minor Injury Units are not for medical emergencies or life & limb-threatening injuries, and the Health Board's clinical advice remains to call 999 or go to A&E.

Yours sincerely



**Hayley Thomas**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

cc. Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care