

OVERNIGHT CLOSURE OF MINOR INJURIES UNIT AT PPH FOR 6 MONTHS

Dear Jeremy,

I hope you are well and enjoying your new role.

I am writing to you on behalf of the Save Our Services Prince Philip Action Network (SOSPPAN) who represent the people using Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli.

We have been a critical friend of Hywel Dda's provision of services for many years and were instrumental in relating to the people of the Llanelli Area, on the behalf of and at the request of Hywel Dda Management, that the Accident and Emergency Services had been removed from Prince Philip Hospital.

Subsequently we worked with various organisations on the Judicial Review to have the AMAU and the MIU implemented at PPH and fully staffed to provide 24hour, 7 days a week 365 days a year cover.

So you can imagine our dismay when SOSPPAN were informed along with Nia Griffith and Lee Waters by Hywel Dda Health Board on the evening of Friday 20th September 2024, that they are proposing to the Main Board on Thursday 26th of September 2024, that the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) will be closed overnight (20:00 to 08.00) for 6 months at Prince Philip Hospital.

This goes against their assurances to us all, only a few months ago, that the unit would be fully covered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the foreseeable future earlier this year.

We have been assured that the Acute Medical Assessment Unit (AMAU) will continue to provide a service 24 / 7 a number of times.

Now it would seem that this proposal is not about money but about the lack of General Practitioner Cover and without that, the Emergency Nurse Practitioners feel too exposed to make safe decisions for the few serious cases that present themselves to the MIU.

This finding has been backed up by a medical inspection in June 2023 stating that the service was unsafe during the night due to the severe lack of cover by the GPs.

Instead of addressing the issue on the advice of the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and keeping the service functioning the Management has instead decided to take the easy way out and remove the overnight service, purely on the grounds of safety

This is the same excuse that has been used time after time to relocate services to other areas rather than provide a safe service at PPH. Removing services 19 miles away to Glangwilli Hospital is totally and utterly unacceptable and yet again will hurt the frail and the vulnerable the most."

The other option and the one that is likely to be used is that people will travel to Morriston Hospital for help rather than Glangwilli but neither hospital has the capacity to take the 6,000 presentations each year that the MIU is currently dealing with over night.

Although the Hywel Dda Management, state that keeping the MIU open as being a safety risk, closing it will create a far greater risk for the people

needing to present themselves for medical advice which will now be removed from the Llanelli area.

Unbelievably Llanelli, a town with a catchment of more than 69,000 will be left without overnight medical cover apart from ambulance referrals which currently cannot cope with the workload, which is why the major referrals of just under 2,000 (5.5 in a 12 hour period of 20:00 to 08:00) self present.

Other questions present themselves and answers are awaited:

If the AMAU is open with doctors, why cannot these doctors cover the rare occurrences when a severe case presents itself in the MIU?

Why hasn't the proposed links to Morriston Hospital been agreed after many years of negotiations so that people are much closer, if the cannot be treated at PPH.

Why cannot a triage system be implemented to push patients to the right section?

If it is a fact that the MIU and the AMAU cannot cope, should not the A&E be reinstated to PPH as we have, by far, the largest population in the immediate catchment area?

SOSPPAN rejects this removal of service, which is not so much about making PPH a safe place to be treated but rather an abrogation by the Hospital Management, to provide a safe local service and consequently putting patients lives at risk by demanding they travel much further for diagnosis and treatment.

If the requirement is for "a breathing space" to come up with an idea that reinstates the MIU overnight sustainably, why cannot a temporary fix be implemented, to keep the department and unit a working overnight service until a sustainable solution is found and implemented?

If someone was to propose that the 'fire cover' or 'police cover' were removed for this period every night, the Government would not allow this. Why should 'medical cover' be any different with the possibility of putting literally thousands of people's lives at risk?

It is simple for us in Llanelli and for SOSPPAN.

This is our Red Line which cannot be crossed and the reduction of services at PPH must stop now.

We believe that this is the time for the Welsh Government to step in under your auspices and either insist that the Unit is kept open whilst a sustainable solution is found by the current Management Team, rather than an alleged temporary closure, which may well turn into a permanent removal of local medical cover.

Or with yet another huge overspend whilst still reducing and removing services should Hywel Dda be put into Special Measures' as they seem not to be able to provide a sustainable service to the public as required of them.

Kind Regards

John Prosser (Sec of SOSPPAN).