

NORTH WALES LOCAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE
PWYLLGOR MEDDYGON TEULU GOGLEDD CYMRU

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7th August 2017

CHAIRMAN: DR E D JESSUP

SECRETARY: DR P W WHITE

TREASURER: DR G O JONES

ACCOUNTS: Ms Julie Burrows

To North Wales Assembly Members

Dear Assembly Members

As the statutory body representing the voice of GPs in North Wales, we feel we need to inform you, as our representatives in Welsh Government of the escalating crisis developing in Primary Care in North Wales.

We warned of this possibility a few years ago and it seems to be coming to pass whereby increasingly large areas of North Wales are losing their traditional General Practice provision.

We are an apolitical organisation, and write this letter to seek cross party co-operation for the sake of the health care of the citizens of North Wales. We have moved from the position that it was a minority of areas in North Wales that were at risk of losing their GP to the majority of areas now being at risk.

New models of care are being trialled, but a lack of Nurse Practitioners and other allied health professionals as well as GPs is threatening the success of these schemes.

Wrexham now has six large practices that have lost their GPs. The LHB are directly managing these practices, along with many others across North Wales. The number of practices moving to "managed status" seems to have picked up significant speed in the last few months. LHB figures show that "Managed Practices" cost approximately a third more to run, and the growing number of these practices will have a significant impact on the health economy of the region.

Whilst Wrexham is at the most acute end of this problem the North Wales coastal strip is not far behind, Colwyn Bay, Conwy and Llandudno now have practices either currently managed or about to become managed.

The Lleyn peninsula is also badly affected, Criccieth practice having just given in their notice of closure.

The domino effect that has long been forecast is now seriously looming on the horizon.

The BMA heat map shows quite clearly that North Wales is significantly more affected than other parts of Wales.

Out of Hours provision continues to be stretched and has large gaps in service provision overnight especially. These problems are all interconnected.

At the heart of all this is a dwindling ability to retain General Practitioners in North Wales, many of whom are leaving the Profession prematurely by reason of retirement, resignation or emigration.

We are also unable to recruit GPs to North Wales.

A lack of long term Undergraduate Medical student placement and long term famine of post graduate trainee places are at the heart of this problem.

There has been a seeming absence of proactive action to address the fundamental issues behind the crisis we now face.

Just this week, we were distressed to hear that trainee posts appear to have been withdrawn from the pool that exists in North Wales. Good candidates have moved up to North Wales in anticipation of applying for these posts and are left disappointed by this seemingly precipitous decision.

The common theme for those practices handing back their contracts is that in spite of spending several thousand pounds on recruitment, no recruits are coming forward to show interest.

Since we last raised the issue of this potential collapse there seems to have been little recognition that North Wales has issues more acute than down South.

The initiative giving extra funds to trainees coming up to North Wales is welcome but there has to be concern that the worsening Primary Care environment within North Wales is such that these doctors will not stay after qualification beyond the minimum period laid down by WG.

There is a marked imbalance of trainee GP places that sees the M4 corridor with proportionately more places than North Wales.

Whilst it is important to ensure that the posts we have in North Wales are filled, the low level of numbers of posts over many years has left the region with a serious deficit of younger GPs amongst our cohort.

Some LHB managers give an optimistic view of the situation which we do not recognise.

We see a second-class system arising from the collapse of a well-established gold standard system, rather than something better coming forth as a result of careful forward planning.

As our representatives in WG we ask that you make it clear to all who have power and influence that North Wales is disproportionately badly affected by the current recruitment blight.

We would ask that there is cross party support across North Wales to support the following.

1: Expansion of Post graduate training schemes across North Wales for GPs.

2: Development of long term Medical student undergraduate placements in North Wales from Cardiff and other English Universities with strong links to North Wales.

3: Recognise the disproportionate impact of the recruitment crisis upon North Wales.

4: Support the traditional model of practice as the most economically viable way to deliver Primary Care.

If any of you would like to meet the LMC to discuss this situation we would be delighted to meet with you to help inform you further if you would find that of assistance.

Kind regards

Dr Eamonn Jessup

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eamonn Jessup', written in a cursive style.

Chair North Wales Local Medical Committee.