



NORTH WALES REGION

LLAIS LOCAL FLINTSHIRE

FEBRUARY 2025



Eich llais mewn iechyd | Your voice in health
a gofal cymdeithasol | and social care

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About Llais

We believe in a healthier Wales where people get the health and social care services they need in a way that works best for them.

We are here to understand your views and experiences of health and social care, and to make sure your feedback is used by decision-makers to shape your services.

We seek out both good and bad stories so we understand what works well and how services may need to get better. And we look to particularly talk to those whose voices are not often heard.

We also talk to people about their views and experiences by holding events in your local communities or visiting you wherever you're receiving your health or social care service.

We also work with community and interested groups and in line with national initiatives to gather people's views.

And when things go wrong we support you to make complaints.

There are 7 Llais Regions in Wales.

Each one represents the "patient and public" voice in different parts of Wales.



Background

As part of our work plan Llais North Wales undertook to engage with citizens across Flintshire. We did this work between 10 February and 7 March.

So why Flintshire? Having reviewed the feedback received from the various engagement activities undertaken to date, it was apparent that there was little feedback from citizens of Flintshire about their experiences of health and social care. With this in mind, we thought it appropriate to undertake a Llais local across the county of Flintshire to gather the views and experiences of the citizens of Flintshire.

Additionally Flintshire citizens access health care across the border in England.

A county wide approach would aid comparisons of the citizen experiences of health and social care across various socio-economic locations.

We wanted to hear local citizens' experiences of accessing health and social care services and to hear how their health and social care needs are met/unmet; to help identify any service inequalities.



We engaged with various community groups across Flintshire between 10 February and 7 March, speaking to 291 citizens, about their experiences of local health and social care.

What we did

We approached various already established community groups across Flintshire to see if we could attend to gather the views of the attendees about their personal experiences of health and social care services. Many of the attendees were service users as well as paid and unpaid carers. The groups we attended are shown below.

- Airbus 50 + Club, Broughton
- Flint Town Hall Coffee Morning
- Sunshine Café, Leeswood
- Jubilee Court Retirement Complex, Buckley
- Memory Café, Holywell
- Chatterboxes (Brain injury or stroke support group), Buckley
- Hope Church, Coffee and Cake, Hawarden
- Butterflies after stroke group, Ewloe
- Douglas Place Community Centre Lunch Group, Saltney
- Happy Group, Deeside
- Memory Café, Flint Mountain

The community groups advertised our attendance in advance of the meetings; we also promoted our attendance via social media. In total we spoke to 291 people.

We attended 11 community groups across Flintshire



Gathering experiences

We didn't want people to fill in lots of tick boxes about the things we might have thought were relevant, instead we needed to find out what people using the health and social care services in Flintshire were finding during their care, in their own words. We spoke to people directly and each one that completed the feedback form was supported to do so as appropriate.

What we heard

As with our previous Llais local event in Tywyn, we heard from people who had had both good and bad experiences of accessing health and social care services. It has to be said that the majority of the feedback we received was regarding people's experiences of health care. Some people we spoke to were very satisfied with their care, others were less so.

Some of the thematic feedback is very familiar and very difficult to solve quickly, but is the cause of a great deal of frustration for patients as they try to navigate their healthcare needs.

Primary Care

We heard that the 8.00am phone scramble to get a GP appointment remains problematic. Many people told us that once they got to speak to the receptionist all the appointments for that day had gone, meaning that they had to repeat the same process the day after.

Although one surgery says it has pre-bookable appointments people told us that they had tried that option and had all been told the appointments were fully booked.

There was a general consensus that if a GP was finally accessed, they were really helpful.

People told us that in some cases they have to travel a great distance for blood tests, this is problematic if they are reliant on public transport which might not fit in with the appointment time. There was also frustration that the Flint Health and Wellbeing Centre, where the majority of people on Flint wished to have their blood test, is usually fully booked up to a month in advance. Some people then went to Mold or Holywell, where there were two phlebotomists, where there was only one in Flint. There was a general feeling that the local need would be better served by having two in Flint.

People also told us that they were unable to access NHS dental services with many travelling to Chester for both NHS and private dental care. The travel to Chester incurred costs which were a worry for some. At one of the community groups we attended, 2 people told us that they had managed to get onto an NHS dental list, but this was after some considerable time.



It was particularly concerning to hear from a great deal of people how they feel excluded as the system for ordering repeat prescriptions has moved online. Many do not understand how to use the online system and for some this could mean a delay in receiving their prescription and medication.

“Everything is on-line now if you are not on-line, you are stuck. My son is trying to look into it for me as I don’t understand how to order my repeat prescription.”

In Saltney we heard from people about their difficulties in getting a prescription dispensed when the prescription has been issued by a GP over the border in England.

Emergency Department

Long waits at ED also featured. One person had been given a letter from his GP and told to go to Glan Clwyd immediately. When they arrived, they gave their letter in to reception and was told there would be a 36 hour wait. Another told us that they attended Wrexham Maelor with a broken hip; they sat in a wheelchair for 9 hours waiting to be seen.

Many told us about their experiences of long waits for ambulances – the longest being 9 hours.

For those patients that accessed their care at both Wrexham Maelor and the Countess of Chester there were contrasting experiences. A number of them told us that emergency department waiting times were significantly lower at the Countess of Chester than at Wrexham Maelor and if they needed to attend the emergency department, for whatever reason, their choice would be to go to the Countess of Chester.

“I have mixed experiences of Wrexham Maelor, I prefer going to the Countess of Chester.”



"I prefer going to the Countess of Chester Hospital rather than Wrexham Maelor. When you walk into Wrexham Maelor, it doesn't look or smell clean."

Another told us:

"I will never step inside Ysbyty Maelor again."

Parking at Wrexham Maelor

Many people told us about their frustrations of trying find a parking space when attending outpatients' clinics both as a patient and or as carer. The inability to be able to park, added to the stress of attending hospital; this is something that Llais North Wales has heard time and time again.

"Car parking at Wrexham Maelor is appalling. The disabled parking is mainly occupied by people without a blue badge and it's very difficult to find a space."

"Parking at Wrexham Maelor is an absolute nightmare! Why don't they offer community transport to reduce the number of cars, or have a park and ride for staff?"

“Parking at Wrexham Maelor and Ysbyty Glan Clywd needs to be addressed. Surely something can be done? Looking for somewhere to park your car causes so much stress before you even set foot in the hospital.”

One person told us that they have to drop their spouse, who has dementia, off at the entrance to Wrexham Maelor, while they try to find a parking space, and hope that their spouse has not wandered off in the meantime.

Another told us, that they had asked a taxi driver to move from a disabled space so they could park their car, the taxi driver attacked this person. When the incident was reported to the reception staff no action was taken.

Whilst not about the care received, the state of the Wrexham Maelor estate, particularly at a weekend was flagged as a concern. Refuse bins are not emptied over the weekend with the result being overflowing bins and rubbish spilling on to the pavements. This makes the estate look uncared for and does not present a good image to the general public.



Waiting Times

Many told us about long waits for operations with the patient suffering pain and deteriorating health. Other reported delays with their referral to the respiratory clinic with delays in excess of 2 years having a huge impact on the quality of their day-to-day life.

"I have been on the waiting list for 4 years to have an ovarian cyst removed and have heard nothing."

Carers and Respite

Some carers told us that there was little or no respite care available for them, in some cases this meant that the carers were unable to attend their own health care appointments.

"There's a gap in Flintshire for dementia support for the individual but also for the partner/carer. Because I'm fit and healthy, I don't get any support to help care for my husband. It's exhausting, but I'm left to it. I don't have a break at all; coming to this club is my break. I really don't know what would happen if anything happened to me – who would look after my husband?"

"I have no support or respite; I am looking after my wife with mental health issues."

"There's nobody that physically comes to see my wife. The previous support worker would sit with her or take her out for a couple of hours, so that I could have some time to myself to do the shopping for example. Nobody comes to her now, and I don't get any support to have any respite."

"I have no support following my husband's dementia diagnosis, I feel very alone."

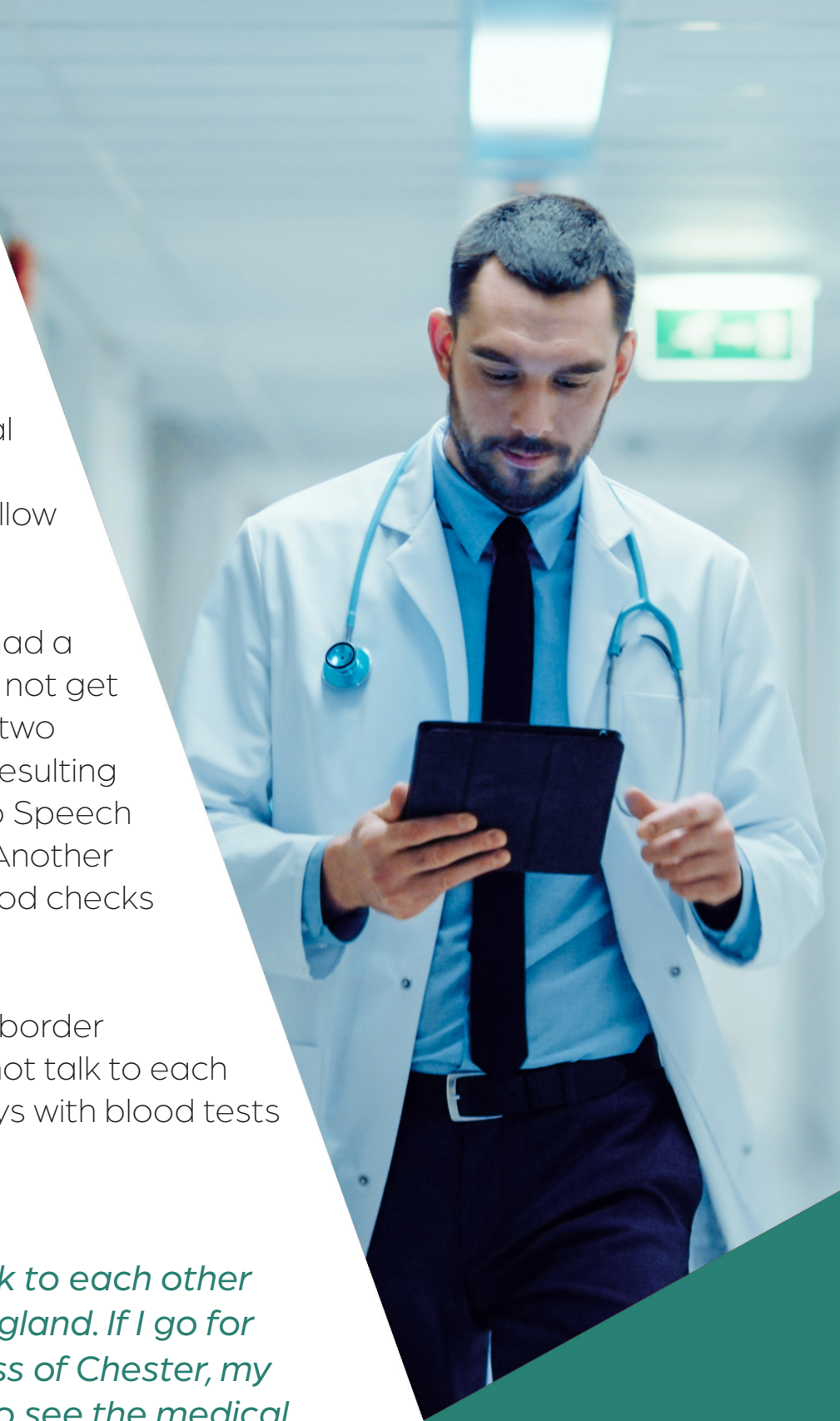
Cross Border Issues

We were told that discharge from local and cross border hospital is problematic; patients sometimes do not get follow up treatment required.

One attendee who had had a stroke told us the GP did not get the discharge letter until two months after discharge resulting in failure to be referred to Speech and Language therapy. Another didn't get the regular blood checks they required.

Some told us that cross-border healthcare systems did not talk to each other, which lead to delays with blood tests and other results.

“NHS systems don't talk to each other between Wales and England. If I go for a blood test to Countess of Chester, my GP in Wales isn't able to see the medical notes or results.”



Eye Care

We heard a significant number of comments about delays to eye care, with the premises at Abergele being singled out for criticism because of the age and state of them. Llais North Wales is undertaking a series of engagement events to Abergele in March; it will be interesting to see if the feedback we receive is reflective of what the people of Flintshire told us.

“I was on a waiting list for 2 cataracts operations for 3 years. I went to the opticians for a routine appointment and was given various tests to see the back of the eye. These could not be performed due to the extent of the cataracts. The optician did a direct referral to Chester and I was seen within a week. The first operation was done the following week. The second was done some months after. Last week I received a call from Wrexham offering an appointment, she explained that they have been done over in Chester and would no longer need any appointment.”

At one event we were told that many had had to pay privately to have their cataracts removed. One person had been waiting for 2 years already; they had considered paying privately but had found the cost to be prohibitive.



Representations made to BCUHB

As a result of the comments and feedback we have received during the course of the Llais Local in Flintshire we have already made representations to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust about some of the feedback we have received.

These representations have regard to the following areas of concern:

- **GP appointments and the 8am phone queue**
- **Long waits at ED**
- **Eye Care and long waiting times**
- **Long waits for operations with the patient suffering pain and deteriorating health**
- **Long Waits for X-rays at Holywell Hospital when referred by a local GP**
- **Long waits for ambulances – the longest being 9 hours.**
- **Phlebotomy services in Flint, Mold and Holywell.**

We await responses in respect of the above and will share the responses and actions taken once received. The Chair of BCUHB has acknowledged the representations as being useful and having picked up some of the themes that they were aware of as well as some that they were not.

Thanks

We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and social care services. We are grateful to the various community groups for allowing us to attend their events. We would also like to thank our volunteers and staff who attended the community groups across Flintshire to gather the experiences.

We hope the feedback people have taken time to share influences health and social care services to recognise and value what they do well – and take action where they need to as quickly as they can to make things better.

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

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