



Llais Gwent Region – Report for Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Public Board Meeting.

January 2025



To inform Aneurin Bevan University Health Board of current issues of concern, and positive observations, or public feedback being addressed by Llais Gwent Region in relation to the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

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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 decision-makers use your feedback 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.

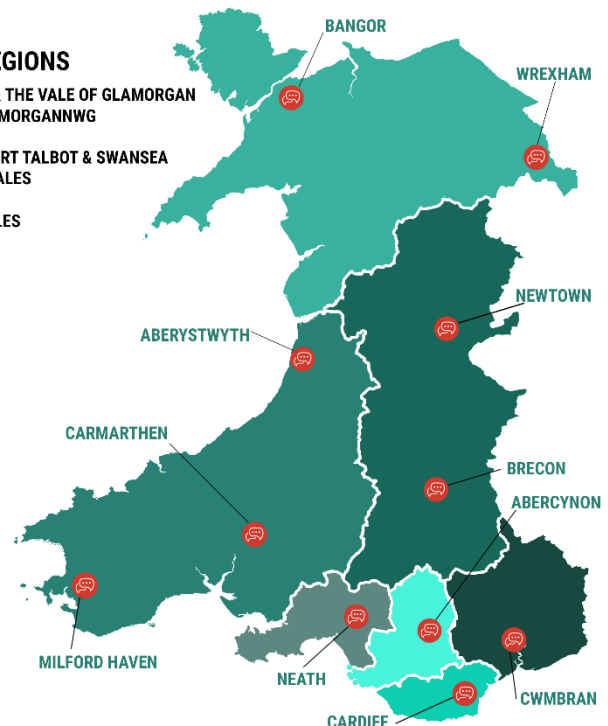
We also work with community and interested groups and in line with national initiatives to gather people's views.

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.

LLAIS REGIONS

- CARDIFF & THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN
- CWM TAF MORGANNWG
- GWENT
- NEATH PORT TALBOT & SWANSEA
- NORTH WALES
- POWYS
- WEST WALES



Introduction



The purpose of this report is to inform Aneurin Bevan University Health Board of current issues of concern and positive observations, and public feedback being addressed by Llais Gwent Region in relation to the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

Llais continues to work in respect of engaging with the population, scrutinising, and offering independent challenge to the NHS and social care, to monitor and consider routine and urgent service changes. We also continue to provide independent Complaints Advocacy Service.

A National Conversation: Llais strategic plan 2024-2027



We now have our first national strategic plan. This plan has been created using what we have been told by the people of Wales, by our staff and volunteers and other bodies and groups we work with.

When this plan was being created, we thought about our legal duties and responsibilities such as the Quality and Engagement Act 2020, Equality Act 2010, The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, The Welsh Language Standards 2016, The Socio-Economic Duty, the Public Sector Duty, and national plans and commitments such as the LGBTQ+ and the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, as well as our remit letter.

Building on what we have learned in our first year, we have grouped things into five main priorities:¹

- 1) Drive a national conversation about the future of health and social care services
- 2) Push for services that meet everyone's needs.
- 3) Work together better.
- 4) Help people and services to use technology in ways that work for them.
- 5) Grow and improve as an organisation.

¹ <https://www.llaiswales.org/about-us/national-conversation-llais-strategic-plan-2024-2027>



Local activities and feedback:

1. Gwent Advocacy Services

There were 74 contacts in November and December. 61 were formal concerns and 13 were enquiries that required early resolution.

Of the 74 contacts, 8 have now been resolved and 66 are still active.

Health & Social Care Services:

- **GP services** (32 contacts), Access to appointments, attitude, services provided being inadequate, prescription issues, off-listing.
- **Secondary Care services** (11 contacts), Waiting times, miss diagnosis, lack of care.
- **The Grange University Hospital** (9 contacts), Communication, waiting times, cancelled operation, lack of care, Maternity, wait on the back of an ambulance.
- **Mental Health Services** (7 contacts) - inadequate, lack of support, diagnosis
- **Dental Services** (3 contacts), treatment received, practice closure.
- **Covid Vaccine** (2 contacts), access and treatment
- **Serennu Centre** (1 contact), Poor communication
- **Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust** (1 contact), Waiting times
- **Pharmacy** (1 contact) access to treatment
- **Social Services** (7 Contacts) – (4 contacts) children services focussed on communication and support from Social Care and (3 contacts) Adults Social Care based around package of care, lack of person-centred care.

2. Local Representations that we have made or been involved in

We have a duty to make representations to health and social care services on behalf of our population when services may change or when we hear about health and social care performance matters that impact on people's experiences (positively or negatively). We might make these representations via formal letter, in emails or by attending planned service groups/meetings hosted by our health and social care partners.

Since November, we have been involved in or made **Local representations** about:

- Nursing Midwifery Council: Culture Report
 - Llais asked ABUHB what support they are providing to staff and patients whilst investigations were underway re the culture report. We were assured by the health board that their support framework includes:
 - Early Intervention and Communication
 - Comprehensive Support Mechanisms
 - Ongoing Monitoring and Escalation
 - Patient and Public Concern Management
 - ABUHB also told us that since the Independent Culture Review, they have strengthened their escalation process to the Nursing Midwifery Council regarding the well-being of staff under fitness to practice investigations. They have also implemented regular meetings between Divisional Nurses and Professional Regulation Leads to optimise communication.

- Ty Cyfannol Patient Safety Concern:
 - Concerns following information received from a patient which included:
 - Safety of patients “patients feeling safe” and
 - Access to medicine in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Ward Manager has provided assurances.

3. Children and Young People

In November, Llais attended the first Torfaen Youth Alliance meeting which was held at Crownbridge School. There were young representatives from:

- Crownbridge School
- Pontypool Youth Council
- Torfaen Opportunity Group
- St Giles

We had the opportunity to listen to young people's feedback about their wellbeing, care, and needs. Young people shared a common theme around their experience with access to CAMHS and counselling services at school.

We have arranged to visit Torfaen Opportunity Group in January 2025 to speak to Young People about their health and social care experiences in more depth.

As part of Llais Local in Blaenau Gwent, we attended Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone and spoke to 42 young people.

Feedback:

- Young People told us they find it difficult to get a GP appointment (no specific practices were named)
- Difficulty in getting help and support for mental health issues, this also included long waits to access mental health services.

4. Primary Care Services

Throughout November and December, peoples access to Primary Care Services, particularly GP Services has been a growing concern, in response Llais has raised a series of representations and developed a visiting schedule to hear people experiences across General Practices.'

Announced visits will take place at:

- Pontypool Medical Centre (New Inn Surgery) 13.01.25
- Pontypool Medical Centre (Main Surgery) 13.01.25
- Pontypool Medical Centre (Goytre Surgery) 13.01.25
- Bevan Health & Wellbeing Centre (Tredegar) 14.01.25
- Aberbeeg Medical Centre 15.01.25

- Blaenavon Medical Practice 16.01.25
- Lliswerry Medical Centre 16.01.25
- Rhymney Integrated Health & Social Care Centre (Meddygfa Cwm Rhymni Practice) 17.01.25
- Meddygfa Gelligaer Surgery 17.01.25

- **Ringland Health Centre (61 people)**

In November, we used people's feedback about their access to services, to make representations to the practice:

- We asked the practice, where appropriate, could they make people aware of the NHS App as most people we spoke to would like to use an online platform to book appointments, but did not use the App.
- People had concerns about the move, to the 19 Hills Health and Wellbeing Centre, including what services they thought were going to be offered. We asked the practice to clarify this for us. (There is an active Coms and engagement group)
- We asked the practice if people were allowed to frequently book appointments with the same clinician as many people were unsure if they could.
- People had difficulties making appointments via telephone. We asked the practice how this could be improved.

We have received early assurances from the practice that they have already implemented new processes and telephone systems ready for the move to the 19 Hills Health and Wellbeing Centre on 13th January 2025.

Report available upon request.

- **Brynmawr Medical Practice (12 people)**

In response to concerns raised, Llais made a series of representations to ABUHB around access and patient safety, this was reported to HIW. Llais also carried out an announced visit to the practice on the 18th of December.

We heard:

- People find it difficult to book an appointment at the practice. There is a telephone queuing system in use, and quite often

there are 30 people in the queue. When they eventually get through, they are told there are no appointments available. People felt worried this could lead to clinical risk.

- We were told there were occasions when the practice shuts at 4pm due to a lack of clinicians.
- The self-check-in machine has been out of order for some time, causing unnecessary queues at the reception desk.
- However, people told us when they get an appointment, the nurses, and doctors are “great,” although patients would like some continuity of clinicians as many are locums.

We Have been advised: As part of the Health Boards enhanced monitoring processes, they will discuss the content of the report in their next assurance meeting.

Report available upon request

- **Bevan Health & Wellbeing Centre (43 people)**

On the 6th of December, Llais attended the Bevan Health and Wellbeing Centre to engage with people about their access to services. In total, we spoke to 43 people.

Glan-Yr-Afon Surgery feedback:

Overall, people felt satisfied with the service they received from this practice.

“Rang at 08:15 asking for an appointment with a doctor and was offered 10:30 to which I was surprised and delighted with. I did self-check-in which was easy. My appointment was with a paramedic”

Tredegar Medical Practice feedback:

People told us they find it difficult to get an appointment.

“Have to phone up at 8am and then all the appointments are gone, so have to call the next day. Parking is very difficult and not enough disabled spaces”

In November, Llais made a representation about the process of booking an appointment in advance. We were told practices are required to offer a level of pre-bookable appointments and should be moving away from stipulating set times that patients should telephone in.

5. Mental Health Services

In December, we launched our Mental Health survey, with the aim to find out people's experiences of accessing mental health services in Gwent. We will use this survey as a tool whilst engaging with people in the community to gather insights.

Our survey can be accessed online by using the following links or scanning the QR Codes:



Welsh



English

- **Community Mental Health Team, Duty Desk, Blaenau Gwent**

Since the transformation of Community Mental Health Team Duty Desk in Blaenau Gwent, we started working alongside Social Care Blaenau Gwent and ABUHB Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Qi-nnovation Hive. We want to hear from people who have recently used the service, ensuring we hear from those who have accessed the services, before and after the changes were made to understand the impact of service change for people and staff.

To do this, we have given people the option to tell us their feedback by completing a short survey, online, or in the post. We have also offered people to call us and speak to a member of our team, or by joining us for an online focus group during January 2025.

- **Inpatient Visits**

We are visiting several mental health inpatient wards across Gwent at the end of January 2025, to understand people's experiences of receiving care and treatment as an inpatient.

6. Engagement in Gwent (November - December)

We focussed our “Llais Local” engagement in Blaenau Gwent to strengthen community voice and experiences of health and social care services. We engaged with 165 individuals in community spaces, education settings, social care settings, and support groups. Our approach is to listen to people and use what they’ve told us to influence change (*we listen, you said, we did*).

We attended the following venues:

- Men’s Den
- Ladies Lounge
- Ebbw Vale Sports Centre
- Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone
- Bevan Health & Wellbeing Centre
- Rainbow Tots & Craft Group
- Cuppa & Company Group
- Tredegar Sports Centre
- Talking Shop

We are collating the experiences and stories people told us and will share this with NHS and Social Care providers by the end of January 2025.

Early insights:

“I went to the Grange with chest pain and was seen within minutes, I underwent tests and required urgent stents in my heart. Within 3 hours of admission, I had stents fitted and was recovering on a ward”

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, people felt services were ‘Inadequate.’ Lack of support for; autistic adults, serious mental health conditions, people with disabilities. More support needed for people with dementia and their families.

“I am currently waiting 45 weeks for an “urgent” appointment to see a Gastroenterologist”

Smiles Dental Practice, Ebbw Vale ‘They strike you off,’ people are not sent check-up reminders and if they forget to book a check-up, they’re taken off the patient list and are no longer registered with a dentist.

7. Upcoming Activities

1) Llais Local: Monmouthshire

In February, we're planning focussed engagement in Monmouthshire. Our volunteers and staff will be in the community, speaking to people about Llais and gathering their insights on health and social care services. We will amplify the voices of Monmouthshire to inform the health board, and local authorities, highlighting where improvements are needed to enhance future services.

2) Presentations

In January and February, we are receiving presentations on the following hot topics:

- Southeast Wales Emergency Out of Hours Social Services Support

National Work:

1. Access to Dentistry in Wales

Llais has released its position statement on the Welsh Dentistry crisis after hearing from over 12,000 people across Wales about their health and social care issues, with dentistry consistently coming out near the top.

[Dental care crisis in Wales: Llais calls for urgent action to ensure fair access for all | Llais](#)

2. Access to GPs in Wales

Based on both the research report, our own engagement, and our national intelligence from sources such as the Older People's research and round tables on GP access among others, Llais will share their position statement in January 2025.

3. Same Day Urgent Care Project

In January 2025, utilising insights from the pan Wales same day urgent care project, and data from the NHS executive, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales reports and Welsh Ambulance Services Trust information we will demonstrate the challenges people face while accessing urgent care.

Thanks



We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and social care services and also sharing their ideas with us.

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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