

TALGARTH TOWN COUNCIL

Mrs Josephine M E Rumsey, Town Clerk

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“Ty-Carreg”
Bronllys Road
Talgarth
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15th September 2020

Mrs Gwyneth Gore
Practice Manager
Haygarth Doctors
The Medical Centre
Forest Road
Hay-on-Wye
Hereford
HR3 5DS

Dear Mrs Gore

We have now received a copy of the Powys Teaching Health Board’s response dated 4th September 2020 to the Community Health Council’s enquiry regarding the Haygarth GP Practice plan to cut opening hours at both surgeries. It would appear from the tone that this is a fait accompli and opening hours will be reduced from 1st October 2020. In view of this decision we feel we have to voice our disappointment and dismay at the total lack of communication, engagement and consultation with your patients and that your strategy would appear to show a complete lack of regard for your patients’ views, concerns and any potential difficulties that reduced opening times may create.

We feel your conduct falls well short of good practice; if the standard GMS contract allows this flawed approach to happen, perhaps this also requires close scrutiny in the future.

Please see below a copy of the letter your practice posted on your facebook page on the 2nd September 2020. We also understand it was to be attached to prescriptions.

“Haygarth Doctors has made an application to Powys Local Health Board to reduce opening hours at both Hay and Talgarth Medical Centres from the 1st October 2020. Hay Medical Centre will be closed on a Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon from 1pm Talgarth Medical Centre will be closed on a Monday, Thursday and Friday afternoon from 1pm.

Emergency appointments will be continue to be available on one site in the afternoon as they have been. The Prescription collection points (hatches) will remain open until 5pm at the closed Medical Centres to allow patients to collect prescriptions.

We have been advised that the funding stream to support our Total Nurse Triage project is due to cease at the end of September and therefore we were advised to make choices regarding service provision should we wish the pilot to continue.

The Total Nurse Triage pilot has been a hugely successful project and has been proven to be beneficial to our patients and our practice team. This pilot has greatly improved patient access to GP appointments, previously patients had to wait of 2 to 4 weeks for a routine GP appointment and the wait reduced to an average of 3-4 days after the Total Nurse Triage was introduced. We were able to increase the time of a GP appointment, allowing the GPs to spend more time with patients when needed.

The Total Nurse Triage system is completely embedded within the practice, it is now an integral part of our working practice for both staff and patients alike. The reduction in opening hours will allow us to maintain this essential service for our patients.

*Should you wish to comment on the application, please contact The Primary Care Department, Powys Teaching Health Board, The Gwalia, Llandrindod Wells
Email: concerns.qualityandsafety.POW@wales.nhs.uk with any concerns with a copy to the Community Health Council enquiries.powyschc@waleschc.org.uk by Friday 18th September 2020.*

Given that not everyone (especially the large elderly proportion of the communities covered by your practice), utilises facebook and not all your patients are receiving repeat prescriptions, it follows that not all your practice population will be aware of the changes. In fact, to date we have failed to find one person who has received any form of communication regarding this matter from either yourselves or the Powys Teaching Health Board.

You state that the Total Nurse Triage Service (TNT) has been a ‘hugely successful’ project which has been proven to be beneficial to both your patients and the practice team. If this is the case, where are the outcomes of the evaluation report/review and patient experience report that proves this expenditure of public funds was justified and should continue?

It was stated at the virtual meeting Tuesday 21st July 2020 that the reduction in hours at the surgeries would, in part, go to assist the cost of continuing the Total Nurse Triage Service (TNT) by cutting staff costs. This would be achieved by natural wastage of non-clinical staff over 18 months. We would argue that this level of savings would be negligible against the annual cost of the TNT and therefore the reduction in hours and the associated potential difficulties for patients is not a realistic cost saving measure and is therefore unsustainable.

We request that you fully consult with all your practice population prior to revisiting your decision.

We would appreciate an acknowledgement of safe receipt of this letter and a substantive response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Josephine Rumsey

Josephine Rumsey
Town Clerk

cc *Katie Blackburn, Chief Officer, Powys CHC*
 Andrea Blayney, Deputy Chief Officer, Powys CHC
 Flora Buckle, Monitoring & Scrutiny Officer, Powys CHC

Carol Shillabeer, Chief Executive, PTHB
Jamie Marchant, Director of Primary, Community Care & Mental Health, PTHB

Vaughan Gething MS
Kirsty Williams MS
Fay Jones MP
The Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP

Powys County Councillors
Town & Community Councils in the Haygarth Medical Practice