

**Y**NG Nghymru, mae gofal iechyd wedi'i ddatganoli i Lywodraeth Lafur Cymru yng Nghaerdydd. Er hyn - a'r ffaith fod pum Aelod o'r Senedd yn cynrychioli Ynys Môn (a hynny'n cynyddu i chwech cyn bo hir), mae pryderon ynghylch gofal iechyd yn cynrychioli tua thraean o fy mhost. Y llynedd, ysgrifennodd yr Ysgrifennydd Iechyd at y gweinyddiaethau datganoledig yn eu gwahodd i gyfarfod i drafod sut y gallai'r DU gydweithio i fynd i'r afael â rhestrau aros. Yn siomedig, honnodd Gweinidog Iechyd Cymru nad oedd ganddi'r gyllideb ychwanegol i allu hwyluso'r cynnig hwn, er y manteision amlwg y gallai ei gynnig i bobl Cymru.

**H**EALTHCARE is devolved in Wales to the Welsh Labour Government in Cardiff. Despite this - and the fact that Ynys Môn is represented by five Members of the Senedd (soon to increase to six) health-care concerns represent around a third of my postbag.

Last year the Health Secretary wrote to the devolved administrations inviting them for talks on how the UK can work together to tackle waiting lists. Disappointingly, the Welsh Health Minister claimed not to have the "additional budget to facilitate" this proposal despite the clear benefits it could offer the people of Wales.

Almost every day I get emails and letters about the awful state of local health services. I hear from patients, families and even members of staff who are deeply concerned about Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and the effect its failings are having on the people of North Wales and particularly those on Ynys Môn. I do not believe that the concerns of my constituents are being listened to by the Senedd in Cardiff which is why I held a debate in Westminster about Cross-Border Co-operation on Health Services.

The Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care, Minister Andrew Stephenson, responded to my debate saying: "I pay tribute to my Honourable Friend for the work that she has done to improve health services in Wales and promote the importance of cross-border health co-operation across the entire United Kingdom. She raises the concerns of her constituents with me and other Health Ministers week in, week out. Her constituents could wish for no better representative than her. I hope that what I have said today shows that we are committed to improving health services for everyone across the whole of our United Kingdom"

You can listen to the full debate by following the link to my YouTube channel here [www.youtube.com/@Virginia-CrosbieMP](http://www.youtube.com/@Virginia-CrosbieMP).

When I look at my postbag, what concerns me is that the

# Actions needed as awful health board headlines may be tip of the iceberg



● Virginia Crosbie with Minister for Health Andrew Stephenson

damning headlines we have all seen in recent years about BCUHB may be just the tip of the iceberg.

We have by far the biggest health board in Wales. BCUHB has a budget of £1.9bn and is responsible for a quarter of the Welsh population - more than 700,000 people spread across a huge and predominantly rural area.

It is currently in Welsh Government special measures for the second time - and has spent six of the past ten years in special measures. Despite this its performance seems to be getting worse not better. It has been called "dysfunctional", "chaotic" and "a basket case".

Whilst I know that front-line staff are doing their absolute best in incredibly challenging conditions, the headlines are devastating. In February 2023 the Welsh Health Minister sacked independent board members and it is now on its eighth chief executive in eleven years. An audit of its 2021-22 accounts found £122m unaccounted for.

After so much time in special measures you would expect by now to see at least some improvement - yet according to recent data the figures for

people waiting more than two years for an appointment in North Wales are almost double the level in other Welsh health boards. England currently has no two year waits.

It is difficult to relate just how bad some of the stories I hear are:

- People discharged from hospital sicker than they went in.
- Hours waiting for ambulances...and hours in ambulances waiting outside A&E.
- Errors in patient records.
- Appointments being "lost".
- Significant failures in the provision of medication.
- Palliative patients dying in hospital because "fast tracking" them home will take weeks.
- Medical appointments being cancelled and rearranged for hospitals 60 miles away.
- The near collapse of local NHS dental services.

I hear story after story of lives drastically and sometimes irreversibly impacted by the failures of BCUHB.

Holyhead in particular faces very difficult challenges. During the pandemic two GP practices were merged into Hwb Iechyd Cybi. This practice has suffered a series of problems

including twice reaching the threat of having no GPs - most recently earlier this year.

One of the main things that would make a difference to the practice would be to co-locate the two original practices.

Plans have been proposed for this project which would vastly improve the service the practice can deliver and therefore have a positive effect on patient outcomes.

This project was put forward more than two years ago but has stagnated in BCUHB's hands which means that the staff working at Hwb Iechyd Cybi are working in sub-optimal conditions and the 9,000 patients they care for suffer as a result.

An integrated health centre in Holyhead has been under discussion for years. It is still "under discussion" but last week I met with Chris Couchman, BCUHB's Associate Director of Primary Care who reassured me that the project is progressing. A strategic outline case will be delivered to the Welsh Government soon and then, subject to their approval and funding, a new facility may be open as early as

2028.

Thousands of people in the west of Anglesey would benefit if there was an integrated new health centre in Holyhead. It could take the stress off Ysbyty Gwynedd and allow local people to access health services without a 25 mile journey to Bangor.

In order to press the Welsh Government into action, I have launched my own petition to raise the issue and call on BCUHB to proceed with the co-location project and start work on the health centre with urgency.

Despite claims to the contrary from the Welsh Government the problems with the NHS in Wales are not down to a lack of funding from Westminster. Under the devolution settlement, the Welsh Government receives around £1.20 per person for every £1 in England. However, it is for the Welsh Government to choose how it spends its settlement and at the moment it is choosing to spend it on things like implementing the 20mph default speed limit and increasing the size of the Senedd from 60 to 96 members.

It is almost impossible to compare patient outcomes across the devolved nations and see just how bad it really is because the Welsh Government produces different data to the UK Government.

What we do know are facts like:

- In 2023 over 22,000 paramedic hours were lost in Wales just waiting outside A&E.
- In January 2024 more than 3,000 people in North Wales waited for more than 12 hours to be discharged from A&E.
- Nearly 60,000 BCUHB patients had been waiting more than 36 weeks to start treatment in January 2024. Six years before, that number was just under 10,000.
- Over 57,000 people across Wales have been waiting more than a year to start treatment with 24,000 patient pathways waiting more than two years.

We also know that since 2010-11 the Welsh Government has increased health spending by 30.6% well short of the UK Government's increase

in England of 38.9%.

During my debate, and in a joint letter I sent to the Department for Health and Social Care with other North Wales MPs, I am asking the UK Government if they will help us to find a solution. The people of Anglesey desperately need:

- 1. Much better co-operation across the borders on our health services
- 2. Data that allows the direct comparison of performance across all health boards in the UK - regardless of whether or not they are devolved
- 3. A recognition that the UK Government has a moral - and arguably a legal - duty to take action where the wellbeing of its citizens is compromised - and the willingness to act on that duty where necessary.

It would be fantastic to see the Welsh Government prioritising health like the UK Government is doing, for example with its move for pharmacies in England to be able to prescribe medication for common conditions like earache and impetigo.

We desperately need the UK Government to step in and up the ante on cross-border co-operation on health and I have invited the Health Minister to visit Ynys Môn and speak to people here about their experiences of the Welsh NHS.

If you would like to tell me about your experiences of health in Wales and sign my petition to co-locate the Hwb Iechyd Cybi surgeries please visit [https://www.virginia-crosbie.co.uk/holyhead\\_health](https://www.virginia-crosbie.co.uk/holyhead_health)

I enjoy meeting as many constituents as possible, as well as helping individuals, groups and organisations with problems, projects and ideas. You can contact me at [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) or call me on 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.

Rwy'n mwynhau cyfarfod â chymaint o etholwyr â phosibl, yn ogystal â helpu unigolion, grwpiau a sefydliadau gyda problemau, prosiectau a syniadau. Yna cysylltwch â ni - byddwn wrth fy modd ynclwywed gennych - gallwch gysylltu â mi ar [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) neu ffoniwch fi ar 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.