



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/06573/19

Jennifer Charles
Wales Equality Alliance

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6 June 2019

Dear Ms Charles,

Thank you for your e-mail of 15 May which included an open letter to the Welsh Government raising concerns about the Wales Gender Team (WGT).

In your email you refer to your letter to Len Richards, Chief Executive of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (C&VUHB), and I understand that the Health Board responded to you on 16 May.

In terms of the issues raised in the open letter, I can assure you that progress is being made and we expect to announce the opening of the WGT in the coming weeks. Officials are in daily contact with both the Welsh Health Specialist Services Committee (WHSSC), as the commissioner of the service, and with C&VUHB, which host the Wales Gender Team. Whilst I am frustrated with the delay, it is important that the pace at which the service is established does not compromise the level of care that can be offered. With this in mind it is appropriate that the Health Board has taken the necessary time to secure the right balance of clinical expertise to meet the needs of patients.

A key issue for C&VUHB has been in the recruitment of key posts, including the Gender Clinician Lead. I am, however, pleased to inform you that C&VUHB has now secured an experienced Gender Clinician Lead from another Gender Identity Clinic, who I understand is held with high regard by the trans community.

In response to the specific issues that you have raised, the implementation of the service, including the recruitment processes remains the responsibility of WHSSC and C&VUHB. I understand that the current clinical lead has been involved for over 2 years in the work to establish the service and C&VUHB has assured me that they have followed due process in establishing the roles within the WGT. Currently, posts are being recruited on a temporary basis to reflect that this is a new and evolving service.

C&VUHB has also assured me that it is confident in the calibre of the appointments made to date, to fulfil the requirements of the WGT. The provisions of the service do need to be flexible in order to respond to individual need and ultimately determine the appropriate balance of the multidisciplinary clinical sessions that will be required in the longer term.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The WHSSC has provided assurance that the CP182 protocols and associated guidance have been, and continue to be, followed in the development and implementation of the service. In terms of the wait times to access appointments, once the Health Board has confirmed the number of clinical sessions that are available, the wait times can be calculated. The WGT has already prioritised appropriate individuals on the waiting list for the London Gender Identity Clinic who will be sent an appointment for the new service as soon as it is operational.

As I set out in my previous letter to you, it is important to understand that the Wales Gender Team is only one element of the improvements we are making to gender identity services in Wales. The integrated pathway includes Local Gender Teams which have been established in all Health Boards and will provide the intermediate level of service, based within the individual's own Health Board area. We are also finalising a Directed Enhanced Service to increase support in primary care. More broadly, training is also being delivered to increase the capacity in NHS Wales to understand and respond to the needs of trans people.

I remain committed to improving gender identity services in Wales but recognise that as a new and specialist service it will take time to evolve. I do hope that the Wales Equality Alliance will continue to support this process to ensure the improvements meet the needs of our trans community.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that all signatures of the open letter receive a copy of my response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services