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

13 February 2024

Attention of:

Jill Patterson Director of Primary Care,
Community and Long-Term Care

Sent via email jill.paterson@wales.nhs.uk

Dear Jill

Llais response to Laugharne engagement

Background

Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB) informed us that the Coach and Horses had applied to close its Branch Surgery at Laugharne. The list size of the practice is 7252 people, of which nearly a third of the practice list reside between Laugharne and Pendine.

The Practice currently provides General Medical Services to its registered patients from two premises: a main site in the Coach and Horses situated in St Clears and a branch site in Laugharne.

Work began immediately with HDUHB to understand the emerging position and how public engagement should be designed and structured.

Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive: **Alyson Thomas**

Cyfarwyddwr Rhanbarthol (Llais Gorllewin Cymru)/Regional Director (Llais West Wales): **Donna Coleman**

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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English. If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

The Role of Llais in Service Change when changes are proposed.

The NHS and local authorities must involve people when they plan, develop, and design services from the start so that they can understand peoples' existing and future needs.

The role of Llais is to help make sure they ask you for your views and then think about and respond to what you say.

For full details of Llais role in Service change please see:

<https://www.llaiswales.org/our-role-service-change>

Engagement process.

- Through discussions with the Health Board, we worked together to agree a public engagement plan.
- The engagement period ran from 1st November 2023 until 8th December 2023.
- The engagement process used standard media, social media, poster, and paper/virtual survey approaches that were left at both surgeries, pharmacies, and surveys were also taken to care homes within the area.
- The Health Boards' dedicated Communications Hub was used to field telephone calls.
- Llais had the survey on their website, and social media approaches were also used to promote the survey and engagement events.
- People completed the survey on the Llais website, and this was shared anonymously with the Health Board.
- An engagement event was held at Laugharne on the 28th November 2023 with approximately over 115 people attending.
- There was a further engagement event held on the 6th February 2024 with approximately 125 people attending
- People's views would be fed into the overall responses

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What people said during the engagement.

A few broad themes came through at these events:

- People were concerned that on the 1st of April 2024 that they would not have any medical services within Laugharne.
- People were concerned regarding their medication.
- Some people felt that Coach and Horses in St Clears could be very busy and congested at certain times and would be worse if Laugharne surgery closed
- People wanted medical services to be delivered from the Laugharne practice and thought that development of other services could be delivered from that site, with Public Health and the Health Board.
- There undoubtedly great concern about travel, stating that the bus routes and timetables were not good in that area and did not co-inside with appointment times . Some people state that they would have to wait nearly 2 hours for a return journey.
- People stated that they were not given an opportunity to have appointments at Laugharne as this was not offered when phoning for an appointment.
- People also stated that Laugharne surgery was “ well used” before COVID
- People felt that if the surgery closed then the pharmacy would be next to close.
- One of the most interesting aspects of the engagement was that a small proportion of people were less worried about the proposed permanent removal of doctors from the site, and more concerned that it would be lost as a more general healthcare resource to the community. A number of people felt that clinics and the attendance of other health professionals could be beneficial. With this said most people wanted a GP at least 3 mornings a week .

What we thought of the engagement process

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The Health Board worked with Llais in the early stages and communicated effectively, this included weekly engagement “catch-up” meetings. The Health Board and the Practice were committed to the process, being open and transparent with the public and explaining the reasoning behind the application. The event was well attended by the Primary Care team, GPs from the Practice along with Llais staff and volunteers. The Health Board and Llais captured comments made on social media. Llais shared with the HB anonymously, the responses and themes that had come to them via the internet or in writing.

Our conclusion

People were worried and passionate about their health care services in Laugharne and the surrounding areas, and this came across in the engagement event , from numerous letters and emails that Llais had received.

Llais is not able to take an expert stance on the complex and challenging logistics of a GP provision or generate solutions for an area. Our focus is on ensuring that our conclusions are based upon the impact of the service change proposal to people that are affected, ensuring these impacts are understood and incorporated into the decision making.

Having considered information available, and public feedback during the engagement period Llais makes the following points:

Laugharne Branch surgery closure application and Llais summary view

Llais believes that Laugharne branch surgery **should remain open** and accessible to the public due to nearly a third of its practice list living between Laugharne and Pendine. Laugharne has an aging population with people moving into the area to retire, along with new housing developments in addition to an influx of tourists in the summer months.

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We agree that there is a difficult balance to achieve between practices acting proactively and decisively to ensure their long-term sustainability for patients versus continuing challenging logistic struggles of running two or more sites day to day. Acknowledging this, we feel more needs to be done to explore how Laugharne branch surgery can deliver care to local people.

Strategic fit” and “Care Closer to Home”

In it’s strategy “A Healthier Mid and West Wales” the Health Board aspires to provide health services that keep people well, prevent ill-health or the worsening of ill health. It also says that it is working in communities to provide more joined-up support and care “as close to home as possible.

As a general point, Llais is concerned that closing branch surgeries will take care further away from home and this was reflected in what many people had to say.

Therefore, Llais feels that any primary care closure risks isolating a community from the “front door” of NHS services and must only be considered as a last resort in the face of **strong** sustainability issues.

Yours sincerely



Helen Williams
Interim Regional Director

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