



# Meddygfa' r Sarn

Patient Engagement Summary

9 February – 6 April 2026

# Background



- Meddygfa'r Sarn has been a Health Board Managed Practice since 2017, operating from the same premises in Pontyates and serves a population of approximately 4.4k patients.
- On 31 October 2025 the Vacant Practice Panel met to examine the future provision of primary medical services for the patients of Meddygfa'r Sarn Health. The Panel examined various options to assess their viability and made a recommendation for a managed dispersal of the registered patient list across neighbouring practices from 1 April 2026.
- On 29 January 2026 this recommendation was brought to Public Board. The Board noted the Panel recommendation alongside concerns from some stakeholders and agreed that an 8-week period of public engagement would be undertaken, with the outcome presented to the Public Board meeting on 28 May 2026.

# The Patient Engagement Plan

- The engagement was led by the Health Board Primary Care team supported by the Patient Engagement and Communications teams, and was undertaken from **9 February – 6 April 2026**
- Letters and questionnaires, were sent by post to all registered patients and were bilingual. Large print versions were made available at the practice. Some patients have told us that they fed back by more than once, therefore the number of responses will be greater than the number of patients who responded.
- Weekly meetings have been held to support team working (Primary Care, Patient Engagement, Communications, Communications Hub, Llais) and to regularly review the plan and its implementation.

## Ways patients could engage

- in-person at the public engagement drop-in events in Pontyates on 24 February 2026, Pontyberem on 3 March 2026 and Carway on 31 March 2026 : in total 352 people, with some attending multiple events
- by questionnaire, paper copy enclosed with letter to all patients and QR code to online link to same questionnaire: 957 responses
- by telephone - via the Communication Hub: 4 people
- by email - to [ask.hdd@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ask.hdd@wales.nhs.uk): 6 people
- in writing: comments to be addressed to Hywel Dda FREEPOST address: 2 people
- feedback to Llais **tbc**

# Patient letter and questionnaire

- All registered patients were written to with an outline of the proposed managed dispersal, details of the public engagement drop-in events and the options for how to engage and share feedback with the Health Board. All letters were bilingual and a questionnaire was enclosed (Appendix 3).
- The questionnaire included questions about travel currently and two open questions for patients to share their views on the likely impact of the proposed managed dispersal on them and their families, and any mitigations that might be put in place to address their concerns.
- The second part of the questionnaire was the standard optional equalities monitoring questions – the number of responses dropped-off for this second section.

# The questionnaire

## Section 1

Please answer the questions below

Q1. Please let us know your postcode eg. SA15 5TR

Q2. Which practice are you registered with?

Meddygfa'r Sarn

Other (please state)

Q3. When was the last time you attended Meddygfa'r Sarn?

In the last month

In the last six months

In the last year

More than a year ago

Q4. Thinking about the last time you went to the Surgery; how did you travel there?

On foot

By car

By bus

By taxi

By bicycle

Other (please state)

Q5. What is most important to you about your GP Practice?

Telephone/online access

Appointment availability

Seeing the same team/continuity of care

Car parking

Friendly staff

Other (please state)

Q6. How easy or difficult do you find it to access care from other Primary Care providers in your area? (community pharmacies, optician, dentist). Please rate: 1 – very difficult, 5 - very easy.

	1	2	3	4	5
	very difficult				very easy
Community Pharmacy					
Optician					
Dentist					

Q7. Under this proposal your registration would be transferred to the next nearest Practice to you based on travel time from your home address. For most patients this would be Coalbrook Surgery in Pontyberem. Patients living closer to Kidwelly or Trimsaran would be transferred to Meddygfa Minafon, and those living closer to Llanelli would be transferred to a practice there. If you needed to access services at the next nearest practice to your home address, how would this affect you?

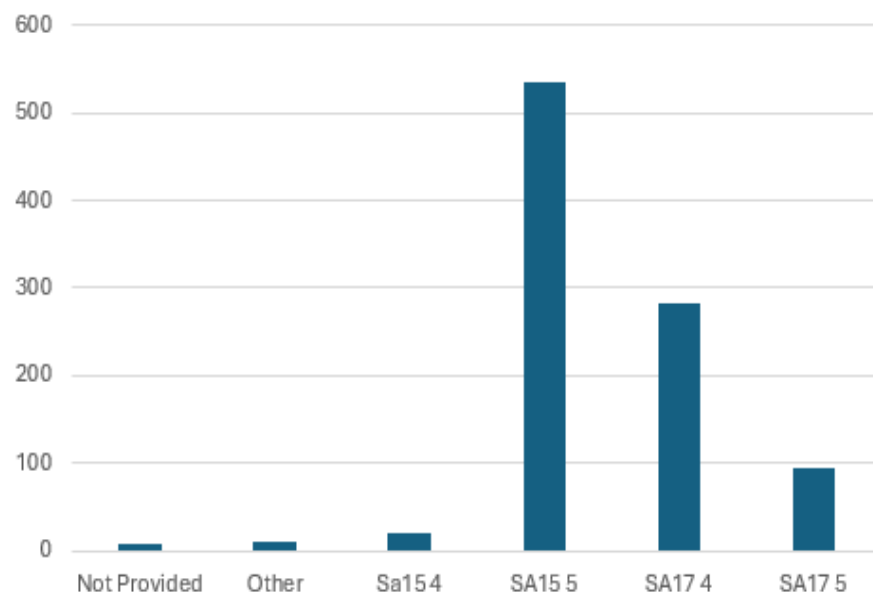
Q8. How do you feel this change would affect you, and do you have any suggestions on how we could reduce any negative impacts?

# Who fed back?

- Over 950 questionnaire responses in total were received by the deadline. Some patients told us they responded more than once so the number of responses is greater than the number of patients who responded. 8 patients responded in Welsh.
- Some patients chose not to complete some or all of the questions in the optional equalities survey, so the profile data is based on those responses received:
  - 68.3% of respondents were aged over 55
  - 54.9% of respondents were women
  - 59.4% of respondents said they had been to the Surgery in the last month
  - 21% of respondents said they travelled to the Surgery on foot

# Where do the respondents live?

Please let us know your postcode e.g. SA15 5TR. Only reported to first 5 characters.

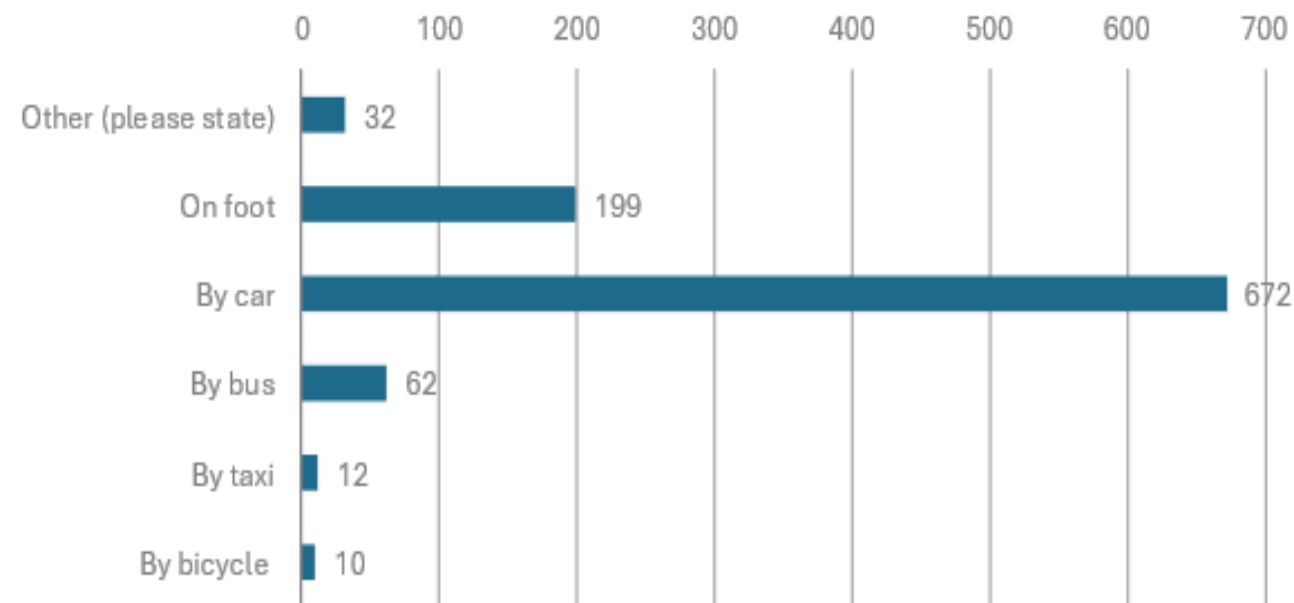


- The SA15 5 postcode is the immediate locality served by the practice – Pontyates, Pontyberem, Ponthenri and Five Roads – so the patient group most directly affected by the proposed dispersal
- SA17 areas are Kidwelly, Trimsaran and other surrounding villages

# Travel to the Surgery

- The majority of people told us they travel by car when they go to the Surgery (68%).
- 20.2% of people said they walked to the Surgery and 6.3% of people told us they travel there by bus (check CCC data)

Thinking about the last time you went to the Surgery; how did you travel there?



## Q7 How would you be affected by the proposed dispersal?

- Q7 was an open question for patients to share their perspectives, so it is harder to analyse these responses numerically, and many people raised more than one concern. Responses were overwhelmingly negative.
- Main concerns were
  - **Travel and transport** to a new practice, with poor public transport routes, too far to walk, costly taxis and reliance on lifts. Some patients told us they didn't drive or they expect to have to give-up in later life.
  - **Access to appointments** – many people thought moving practice would make it harder to get a GP appointment or to be seen in a timely manner. People thought that the receiving practices in Pontyberem, Kidwelly and Llanelli are already 'full' and that large-scale movements of patients would make a bad situation worse.
  - **Older and disabled patients** – many people felt that the proposed change would disproportionately affect the elderly and disabled patients. People talked about loss of independence with transport reliance and it getting harder to be seen when you are unwell. Other people thought they would delay trying to access advice or an appointment because of barriers to care.
  - **Continuity of care** – people were concerned they would lose established relationships with staff and would have to 'start from scratch' with new clinicians.

## Q8: How do you feel this change would affect you, and do you have any suggestions on how we could reduce any negative impacts?

Q8 was another open question

- Again, responses were overwhelmingly negative with some people expressing anxiety or anger over the proposed dispersal and closure of the practice.
- People did not think that adequate mitigations could be put in place to reduce the impact on them, and said that there was no alternative to retaining a GP surgery in Pontyates
- Many people expressed a loss of trust in the Health Board and the process and thought that 'the decision has already been made'
- Transport mitigations – some people said if Sarn were to close the Health Board should provide dedicated or subsidised transport to the receiving practices. Other suggestions included a community minibus or appointment times aligned to bus timetables. Those that did say the impact would be minimal for them expressed concern for others
- Service mitigations – people said that the receiving practices were already over-stretched and that more staff would be needed.

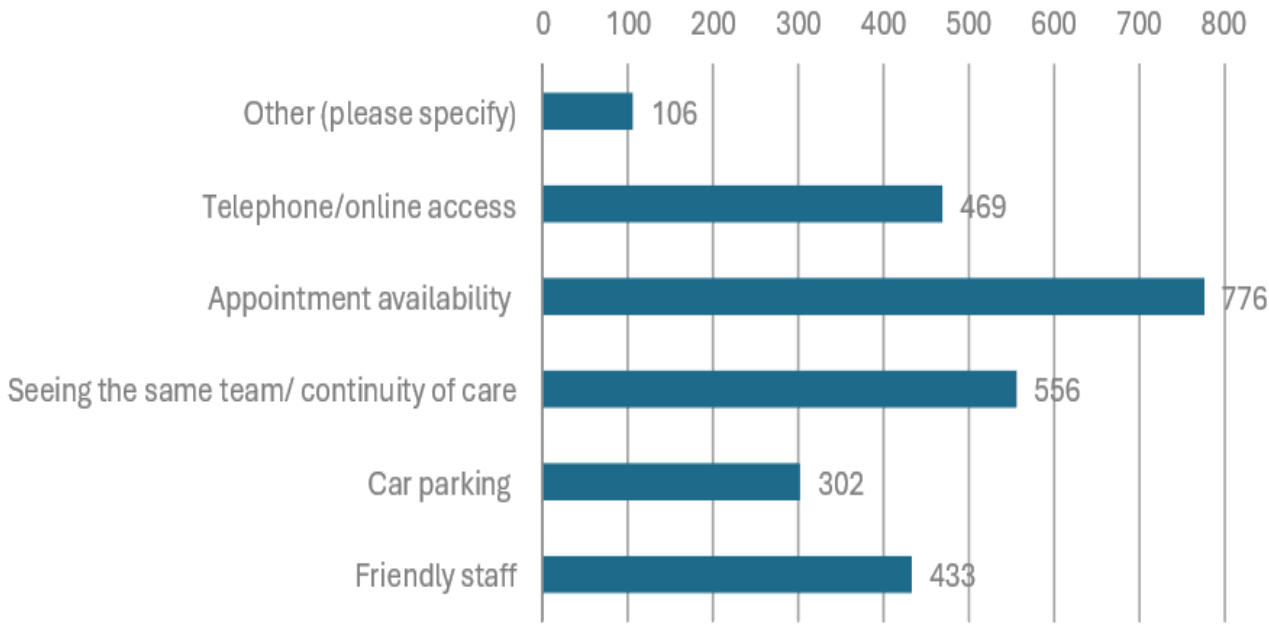
## Other themes and concerns raised included:

- Premises
  - Some patients told us they thought the existing Surgery premises is adequate for purposes. Others want investment to redevelop, refurbish or extend the premises
  - Some patients suggested that if the current building is not an option that alternative premises could be found in Pontyates
  - Some patients said that the flood risk that had been described in a previous report was exaggerated and should not be a consideration
- Recruitment
  - Many patients talked about renewing efforts to recruit permanent GPs to the practice, with some wanting targeted incentives to attract doctors
  - Some patients believed that there are GPs who would like to takeover the practice
- Patient choice
  - When talking about the managed dispersal and the allocation of registrations to the next nearest practice, some patients wanted their personal circumstances rather than travel time alone to be taken into account so they could influence which practice they were allocated to

# Q5. What is most important to you about your GP Practice?



What is the most important to you about your GP Practice?



Patients were asked which aspects of Meddygfa'r Sarn were most important to them. Patients were able to make multiple selections.

29% of respondents included access to appointments

21% of respondents included seeing the same team

18% of respondents said they valued telephone or online access to advice and consultations

## Drop-in events

Three public engagement drop-in events were held during the engagement period:

Date	Time	Venue	Attendees
24 February 2026	1pm to 6.30pm	Pontyates Welfare Hall	215
3 March 2026	3pm to 6pm	Pontyberem Memorial Hall	48
31 March 2026	2pm to 6.30pm	Carway Hall	89

Some people attended multiple events. These events allowed for conversations, questions and dialogue on the issues raised. The themes raised with staff at the events were consistent with the questionnaire feedback, namely concerns about travel and transport, workforce sustainability and concerns around the process.

People talked about staffing and said they thought some of the GP locums might be willing to apply for salaried roles. Some wanted the opportunity for GPs to take over the practice, and there was a widespread belief that the decision had already been made. Other patients said that new housing in the area would create more pressure on local services.

All the drop-in events were proactively promoted by the Save Our Surgery group.

## Drop-in events



Although the themes raised were common the tone and emphasis of the conversations differed between the different locations of the drop-in events:

### Pontyates Welfare Hall – 24 February 2026

- This was the first of the drop-in events and so the first opportunity for people to question and challenge the proposal. This event had by far the highest attendance at 215 people, and the responses in general were highest from this community as the one most directly affected.
- There was a distrust in the process and belief that the decision had already been made. Patients talked about the paucity of public transport between parts of Pontyates and Pontyberem where patients would be dispersed and challenged the references to localised flooding.
- The ‘Cwtsh around the Surgery’ galvanised support for the Save Our Surgery group.
- Of those who completed the event questionnaire on the day, 63% had travelled to the event by car and 27% had walked. 89% said they felt their opinions were valued.

## Drop-in events



### Pontyberem Memorial Hall – 3 March 2026

- This event was held in Pontyates where Coalbrook Surgery, who would be taking the majority of the patients under the proposed dispersal, is located. Attendance was lowest at this event at 48 people, some of whom had been at the Pontyates event the previous week. 84% of those attending travelled by car.
- Those who attended included patients of Coalbrook Surgery, that is not registered with Meddygfa'r Sarn but with the neighbouring practice that would be most impacted. Concerns here were more focussed on services, access and appointments.
- Carway Hall – 31 March 2026
  - This third event was arranged in response to requests by local Councillors. Attendance was 89 people, some of whom had attended previous events.
  - The dominant theme was travel and transport and what patients viewed as rural exclusion. 56% of people travelled by car to the event, with 41% on foot.
  - Some people talked about new local housing development causing pressure on existing services. Others raised operating Sarn as a branch site to Minafon as an alternative model.

In addition, members of the Engagement Team attended the Pontyberem Cwtch Warm Hub and Dementia Group on 24 March 2026 – concerns focussed on travel and transport, access to appointments and services at Coalbrook Surgery.

## Stakeholder engagement



- All local stakeholders were written to at the outset of the engagement period and invited to comment on the proposed dispersal.
- An evening Zoom meeting took place on 9 February 2026 at the start of the engagement period with eight local Councillors and representatives from Llais. Councillors requested additional drop-in events to the two scheduled (a third drop-in event was added) and expressed their frustration with communication, the process and their concerns regarding the potential impact on their communities.
- Communications were received from the Member of Parliament, Members of the Senedd, County, Town and Local Councillors, a religious body and several communications from the Save Our Surgery Group which included an 'Independent Review Report'. All raised concerns including governance, engagement, rurality, and sustainability of services. The engagement period closed ahead of the Pre-election period.
- Concerns about the process were raised by Llais ahead of Board in January.