

Meddyqfa'r Sarn Public Engagement Event 2/3

Pontyberem Memorial Hall, 03/03/2026 (3-6pm)

Notetaker Sheet Summary

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. Some people attended this event who had been at the Pontyates event.

Similar themes emerged to the previous event in Pontyates but the balance was slightly different. The points documented by the notetakers at this event have been analysed using ChatGPT to extract numerical data on the main themes which are listed below:

| Theme | Frequency (out of 28) |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Decision-making | 41 |
| 2. Travel & transport | 40 |
| 3. Workforce, capacity & sustainability | 37 |
| 4. Engagement & Communities | 34 |
| 5. Premises | 29 |
| 6. Patient experience & continuity of care | 25 |
| 7. Community Pharmacy | 21 |
| 8. Questionnaire | 15 |
| 9. Service planning | 14 |

1. Decision-making

Patients expressed concern and mistrust in the Health Board process:

- The decision in favour of dispersal felt predetermined ('you've already made your minds up')
- Some patients wanted to know who was on the Vacant Practice Panel and felt the representation was too remote, saying they wanted to speak to 'the decision-makers'
- People wanted clearer evidence that the practice is unsustainable
- People wanted the Health Board to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment

2. Access to Services & Transport

Again, transport was raised repeatedly.

- Infrequent buses which don't service the necessary routes. Long, complex journeys—often two buses or several hours – and not aligned to appointment times
- Poor taxi and community car availability.
- Lack of parking

3. Workforce, capacity & sustainability

People linked sustainability directly to staffing levels and service pressure:

- People said they already experienced long waits for appointments and difficulty getting through on phones and that the proposal would exacerbate this. They felt all practices locally were already overstretched and could not absorb more patients
- People recognised that the heavy reliance on GP locums was undesirable and talked about shortages across a variety of clinical roles extending to midwives and secondary care clinicians

4. Engagement and communities

People told us they felt the engagement did not address the wider erosion of community that would take place if the proposal was enacted:

- Sarn is seen as vital to community independence, safety, and social connection.
- Loss of services is felt emotionally as well as practically.
- Strong desire for community-led solutions and partnership.
- The importance of the Surgery in the community's sense of identity

5. Premises

People told us:

- Coalbrook and Minafon both lack space and cannot 'take more patients'
- Disabled parking is inadequate or insufficient at Coalbrook

6. Patient Experience & Continuity of Care

People emphasised the importance of familiar staff and local access:

- strong attachment to the staff group at Sarn. These positive relationships made the prospect of closure more distressing
- Anxiety about how other practices would respond to an emergency
- Vulnerable groups (older people, disabled patients) are most affected by change.
- Fear that continuity will decline in larger, busier practices.

7. Community Pharmacy

Comments about local Community Pharmacy were more varied than the previous event in Pontyates:

- Patient perception was that access to Community Pharmacy services can be variable with some overstretched and 'slow with prescriptions'
- There was concern about pathways for getting prescriptions ('if I move doctors do I have to move pharmacy?')
- People told us they relied on Community Pharmacists for day-to-day advice when they can't access a GP appointment.

8. Questionnaire

Some patients expressed frustration at the questionnaire and equalities monitoring section:

- The questionnaire felt like a tick-box exercise and not real engagement
- Some questions were repetitive
- Welsh language questionnaires were confusing
- Equalities questions were intrusive

9. Service planning

People question whether long-term strategic planning aligns with community needs and population growth.

- Housing developments locally have not taken into account the need to plan for sustainable primary care. Population growth not matched by service expansion.
- The expired lease on Sarn has created uncertainty
- Concerns about the long-term financial viability of receiving practices.