



First Minister

Via Email

10 April 2025

Dear First Minister,

RE: An Unacceptable Position for Powys Patients

As you are aware, last month, Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) revived plans which will lead to waiting times being extended for Powys patients receiving treatment in English hospitals, despite capacity to treat Welsh patients being available.

Asking health providers in England to slow down the delivery of care for Powys patients, despite there being sufficient capacity, is both unjust and indefensible. These measures should never have been suggested in the first place. This is completely unacceptable.

These proposals were first considered by PTHB in January, at that time, I held discussions with yourself, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, and the Board to encourage a solution that would avoid implementation. I welcomed the Board's subsequent decision to drop the plans for the remaining 2024/25 financial year. However, it is deeply disappointing that similar measures were brought forward again in March and have now been approved for the current financial year (2025/26). These measures will begin from July 2025.

As you know, residents in Powys are heavily reliant on hospitals in Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry and Hereford. This move will create a two-tier healthcare system where Powys patients are expected to wait longer for treatment than their English counterparts, even when being treated by the same clinicians in the same hospitals.

I raised this matter with you again at the end of March. While I welcome your acknowledgment that the situation is not acceptable, the current position suggests that financial constraints are being prioritised over timely care.

Given the fact, English waiting times have been coming down much faster than here in Wales, and given that clearly there is capacity within English hospitals just over the border, it would be helpful if you could set out what you are doing to ensure Powys patients can use that capacity in England, so that everyone can be treated in a fair and timely manner.

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More broadly, you have on several occasions referred to a new partnership in power, and that the new UK Labour Government and the Welsh Labour Government will work more closely together. Given this is your position, it would be helpful to understand, what discussions you have had with the UK Government on this important cross-border matter.

According to PTHB, in the 2025/2026 financial year, £16 million would be required to ensure Powys patients are treated according to the English waiting time targets. My reading of the position is that PTHB would not be asking providers in England to slow down treatment for Powys patients if this funding was provided by the Welsh Government.

Given that your view is that the Health Boards plans are unacceptable, can you confirm that the Welsh Government will fund PTHB to treat patients according to English waiting time targets or given the fact that you are ultimately responsible for the NHS in Wales and Powys patients, will you instruct PTHB that they cannot progress with their plans which you yourself have referred to as unacceptable.

I would be grateful for your urgent attention to this matter and a clear statement of your government's intentions.

Yours sincerely



Russell George MS
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Montgomeryshire