

# Russell George AM/AC

**Shadow Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development**  
**Gweinidog yr Wrthblaid dros yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy**

National Assembly Member for Montgomeryshire  
Aelod Cynulliad dros Sir Drefaldwyn

February 2013

Dear Resident

I am writing to you regarding some important health issues that are currently affecting our region. The first is an issue which a number of you have approached me about and that is the existing waiting time delays for treatment that have been experienced by many Powys residents.

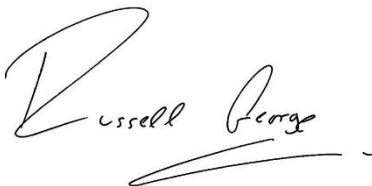
The delays have been due to the budgetary constraints of Powys Teaching Health Board (PtHB), which are primarily the result of deep spending cuts to the Welsh NHS made by the Welsh Government. Many of you will remember just before Christmas when I raised the issue of Powys treatment delays with the Welsh Government, the Health Minister, Lesley Griffiths AM, was adamant that Local Health Boards would receive no extra money. However, recognising that patients were suffering from its intransigence, the Government made a U-turn and provided an extra £82 million to Welsh NHS, of which PtHB received £4 million. I welcomed the additional investment and I made it clear at the time that I expected that money to be utilised so that patients waiting beyond the Government's official waiting time limit of 26 weeks, would be immediately treated.

However, as the new year has progressed, I have had more and more people come to me, continuing to experience unnecessary delays, so I have written to the Welsh Health Minister and the Chief Executive of PtHB for answers and I have attached those two letters for your perusal.

The second issue I wanted to update you on is the future of Bronglais Hospital. Bronglais in Aberystwyth, is an NHS facility that is of enormous importance to us in Montgomeryshire. Yet, during the initial stages of Hywel Dda Health Board's Clinical Services Review, a number of services at the hospital were at risk. Many of you were rightly concerned about those possible changes and the huge consequences they would have on rural Mid Wales. However, due to vociferous local campaigning, Hywel Dda has recently announced in its final set of proposals that key health services will remain at Bronglais. I am pleased that the Board, having listened to local public concerns, has recognised the strategic significance of the hospital and will retain its 24/7 Accident and Emergency service. While there are still a few issues to be ironed out, this result is certainly a lot better than we feared some 12 months ago and it has to be credited to all those in Montgomeryshire who were actively involved in the campaign.

I hope you find this update of interest and please do not hesitate to contact me on this or any other issue.

Kind Regards



**Russell George AM**

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Mr Andrew Cottom  
Chief Executive  
Powys Teaching Health Board  
Mansion House  
Bronllys  
Brecon  
Powys. LD3 0LS

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013

Dear Andrew

**Re: Increased waiting times in Powys**

I am writing to you with increased concern about the growing numbers of my constituents who are being forced to wait for treatment by Powys Teaching Health Board (PtHB).

At my last constituency surgery, I had four separate individuals present their personal circumstances to me, all in a distressed condition, because they are being forced to wait for treatment at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (RJAH).

This comes on the back of the decision that you made before Christmas, where you wrote to a number of hospitals where you commission services, informing them that you were extending referral to treatment times for Powys patients because of budgetary pressures. I stated at the time the unacceptability of my constituents being forced to wait up to 10 weeks longer for elective surgery than anywhere else in Wales.

While I welcomed the Health Minister's announcement on 5<sup>th</sup> December, when she allocated an additional £4m to PtHB to help cover costs for the rest of the financial year, I believe that lurching messily from one bailout to the next is not giving frontline staff the confidence they need to deliver first class services, nor is it giving patients confidence that they are going to be treated appropriately and on time. Health boards like Powys must be sufficiently funded at the start of the financial year in order for them to adequately plan and commission services properly for the needs of the population and I made those views known to the Minister.

However, the most important aspect for my constituents was that this additional money found its way directly to the frontline so that patients who were subject to delays, were duly treated and that the quality of their care was maintained. Yet, what concerns me from constituents continuing to present themselves to me, rightfully complaining about treatment delays, is whether that additional £4m was enough to cover the existing deficit and whether Welsh Government had got its allocation calculations correct. At that point in December, a worse case end-of-year deficit forecast for PtHB was as much as £9m, can you confirm that was the case and can you confirm what your end of year projection is at this current stage, less than 6 weeks until the end of the financial year.

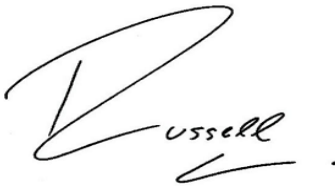
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As these delays were caused by end of year financial pressures, I would hope that PtHB will be in a position in April to ensure that patients will again be treated within the Government's 26 week timeframe. Could you please confirm that this will be the case so that my constituents have the assurance that they will not wait one day more than is necessary to be treated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell', with a large, stylized initial 'R' that loops around the name.

**Russell George AM**

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Lesley Griffiths AM  
Minister for Health and Social Care  
National Assembly for Wales  
Tŷ Hywel  
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22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013

Dear Lesley

**Re: Increased waiting times in Powys**

I am writing to you with increased concern about the growing numbers of my constituents who are being forced to wait for treatment by Powys Teaching Health Board (PtHB).

At my last constituency surgery, I had four separate individuals present their personal circumstances to me, all in a distressed condition, because they are being forced to wait for treatment at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (RJAH).

You will be aware Minister of the incident that I raised with you before Christmas, where PtHB had made a decision that due to budgetary pressures, they were extending referral to treatment times for Powys patients being treated in English hospitals. I stated at the time the unacceptability of my constituents being forced to wait up to 10 weeks longer for elective surgery than anywhere else in Wales. Following these revelations, I had many people contact me annoyed and frustrated, telling me that they felt ever marginalised because they lived in rural Mid Wales; sentiments that I could not disagree with.

I did of course welcome your announcement on 5<sup>th</sup> December, when you allocated an additional £80m of contingency funding to the Welsh NHS, to which PtHB benefited by £4m to help it cover its costs for the rest of the financial year. However, what was important for my constituents was that this money found its way directly to the frontline so that patients who were subject to delays, were duly treated and that the quality of their care was maintained.

Yet, what concerns me from constituents continuing to present themselves to me complaining about treatment delays is whether that £4m was enough for PtHB to cover its projected deficit costs, which potentially could be as high as £9m. Therefore, what I would like to know is what the processes were regarding the allocation of that funding; what formulae were used to calculate allocation and how were the particular budget deficits for each health board identified; were there any specific caveats or obligations put on that money by Welsh Government in terms of patient outcomes and are the health board's obliged to audit and account for that money separately to you and your department.

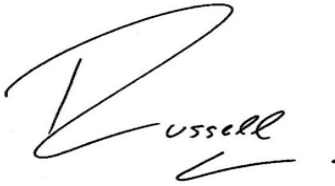
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As these delays were caused by end of year financial pressures, I would hope that PtHB will be in a position in April to ensure that patients will again be treated within the Government's 26 week timeframe. Have you and your officials spoken to PtHB to seek assurances that this will be the case and if not, could you please do so to ensure that my constituents have the assurance that they will not wait one day more than is necessary to be properly treated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell', with a large, stylized initial 'R' at the start.

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