

HYWEL DDA HEALTH BOARD CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

“OUR BIG NHS CHANGE”

UNISON RESPONSE

UNISON welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation document and accordingly this paper will cover the following areas.

1. Trade union consultation/public consultation
2. The reasons for the proposed changes
3. Examining exactly how the service changes will be delivered and coordinated in terms of community care, local government, social care and NHS primary care.
4. Providing examples of how the proposed changes will improve patient care in comparison with existing services.

1. Trade Union Consultation/Public Consultation

In general terms, UNISON was aware that in the year prior to the publication of the proposals, the Health Board has conducted a public survey entitled “Our Big Conversation”. The difficulty, however, was that during this entire period, neither UNISON nor members of the public had any indication that the result of the survey would lead to the publication of such radical and far reaching proposed changes.

This situation was aggravated by the fact that the recognised trade unions were not formally notified of the proposals prior to staff being notified in the so called “drop-in” meetings. Then it seems this led to the press and media picking this up and presenting these proposals as a leaked document which obviously shocked the public and many community representatives.

UNISON believes that a better approach would have been to have had prior formal engagement with the recognised trade unions and public representatives as to the likely direction the proposals were heading towards.

UNISON is of course aware that such engagement would not have been easy, however, UNISON believes that failure to do so created an initial impact of distrust within the community.

In terms of the trade union consultation following the publication of the proposals, UNISON would like to report a further concern.

The Health Board is of course aware that the Hywel Dda NHS Partnership Forum is the sovereign body for consultation with the recognised trade unions. UNISON is therefore disappointed to learn that the Health Board has not made any arrangements prior to the end of the consultation period to meet with the Joint Trade

Unions at the Partnership Forum in order for the trade unions to present their views on the proposals.

2. Reasons for the Proposed Changes

UNISON understands and supports the need for change set out in the consultation document.

UNISON also agrees that failure to make changes in the way we presently deliver health care will result in the continuation of a significant number of people taking up resources in acute hospitals where they could be better cared for in the community and that the consequences of failing to make changes will lead to longer waiting times at A&E Units, cancelled operations, patients on wards not associated with their condition, directing resources away from community and primary care and this on-going situation is not sustainable.

On the question of sustainability, UNISON recalls that the last service changes implemented by the Health Board concerning the downgrading of the A&E service at Prince Philip hospital, together with the removal of the Special Care Baby Unit, maternity services and paediatric services from Witherby hospital was also said to be based on sustainability and the best use of resources.

UNISON does not wish to revisit these changes, however, it is worth noting that they were very unpopular at the time and even though the changes were supported by plans for greater community care and closer working with local authorities, the changes have proved in fact to be unsustainable.

Therefore, given the above and the fact that the present proposals include more extensive service reductions and far wider changes, it is understandable why the proposals have caused concern and can be seen as divisive if not adequately presented and well informed.

3. Examining exactly how the Service Changes will be Delivered and Coordinated in relation to Hospital Care, Community Care, Primary Care and Local Government Social Care

In principle, UNISON welcomes the ambitions behind the proposals, in particular the development of the community hubs and how a planned new hospital could help drive forward all the proposed changes.

Having considered the consultation document, UNISON believes that the Health Board needs to do a lot more work in explaining exactly how these services will be coordinated, developed, funded and planned, together how health care demand is to be calculated and over what period.

- i) How has the Health Board calculated future demand for the complete range of hospital services, community care and primary care to be delivered within the proposed options? What period of time does this calculation cover?

ii) Using the calculations of (i) above, does each option deliver the same quantity of service capacity and if not, what are the differences in each option?

iii) More detail is needed as to the exact range of services in each of the community hubs and how patients will be referred. What specialities will be covered in each of the community hubs in terms of rehabilitation and to cover the services, what range of clinical and other skills are expected to be provided within the hubs?

iv) How will the hubs meet both health and social care needs and what work has been done to ensure coordination between the Health Board and local government for the provision of this service?

v) Before any major hospital changes, is there a plan to build and staff the community hubs to demonstrate their positive impact on existing service delivery? UNISON believes this should be the case as the early development and staffing of the community hubs is a key and fundamental part to the success of the health care changes.

vi) How will GP services and other primary care services cover and coordinate with the proposed changes in health care delivery.

vii) How long is it going to take to design, build and commission the new hospital? What is the capital cost? How is it to be funded and in the meantime what is the planned timetable for the protection of existing services and the testing of safe transition towards the new services before they are implemented?

viii) What is the staffing cost across the entire range of the new service delivery? What additional staff training will be needed and given the current recruitment problems, what plans are there to ensure adequate recruitment?

UNISON understands the need to judge and consider the proposals in their entirety. Having said this, UNISON fully appreciates the widespread concern over the loss of A&E and other general hospital services contained within the proposed options. UNISON is not satisfied that enough work has been done to ensure public confidence that emergency patient transport services will be able to access the planned new hospital within the so-called "golden hour". UNISON also believes that more work needs to be done to plan and develop public transport links for all the new services delivered under the new health care system.

4. Providing Examples of how the Proposed Changes will Improve Patient Care in Comparison with Existing Services

UNISON notes with interest the various patient scenarios set out in the consultation document to show how patients will be cared for under the proposals. UNISON believes this is an excellent and practical way to demonstrate to the public how the new proposals will work.

To expand on this practice and to examine broader challenges for the proposals, UNISON has sought professional advice from the Wales Socialist Health Association. As a result, UNISON would like to set out the following patient scenarios and ask the Health Board to explain how these patients will be cared for under the proposals.

1. 84 year old man, main language Welsh, living in own home in Llandovery with 75 year old wife. Has severe mobility problems and needs help with basic care. Over last 12 months has suffered a number of "mini strokes". The local GP has been actively involved with his care over the last 5 years but no other carer support is in place. At 4pm on a Friday afternoon, he is found by his wife on the floor of the bedroom, confused and complaining of head pain. She dials for an ambulance.
2. 25 year old woman recently moved to Milford Haven from Liverpool is 22 weeks pregnant with first baby. She feels unwell and has strong sharp stomach pains whilst out shopping in the town on Saturday morning. Her concerned husband wishes to drive her to wherever they can get immediate advice. They have not yet registered with a GP.
3. 14 year old girl living with foster parents in Carmarthen, with recent history of eating disorder being managed by her GP, is found by her foster parents collapsed in her bedroom at 8 am one Monday morning. She is breathing but is pale and difficult to rouse.
4. Lunchtime on Tuesday a G.P is at the sheltered housing flat in (? Tumble...) where an 83 year old single man lives alone. He had surgery for bowel cancer about 10 years ago and made a good recovery. 6 months ago he complained of severe pains in the lower abdomen, which were investigated at the hospital but not resolved. Since then he has been symptom free. He is once again in severe pain and a little confused. The GP wishes to get a further opinion on what is happening.
5. Wales Ambulance are called by a member of the public responding to calls for help from a field in a remote farm near Newcastle Emlyn. A middle aged man and a younger male are both trapped under an overturned tractor towing other farm equipment. The older male has severe injuries to both legs and head; both are covered in blood.
6. A 45 year old woman is with her GP in Saundersfoot concerned about a lump she found in her breast three weeks ago. She has been feeling tired and unwell for about four weeks. A previous lump was removed three years before and found to be benign. The GP is concerned on examination that the lump is hard.

Conclusion

UNISON believes that the proposals have promising aspects to resolve the difficulties in the way health and social care are currently provided.

For further consideration, however, the Health Board needs to do a lot more work to ensure that all the questions and concerns in this paper are fully addressed. Without these further assurances, UNISON believes that the public will not be supportive of the proposals and therefore proposals will seem both inadequate and divisive.

UNISON understands the pressure that has been placed on the Health Board by the Welsh Government. In recognising this, UNISON also believes that the Welsh Government has a key part to play in fully funding and providing strategic advice for the Health Board. Providing that the further considerations outlined in this paper are taken on board by the Health Board, UNISON would be prepared to lobby the Welsh Government to provide adequate support and resources.

The Health Board may have seen in the local media that UNISON has taken steps to unite the communities and public representatives across Hywel Dda to bring forward constructive criticisms of the proposals. UNISON plans to carry on this with regards to all aspects of health and social care. UNISON therefore looks forward to the Health Board engaging further with the recognised trade unions and community representatives.

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