



Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

Assembly Member for Aberconwy
Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Local Government

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy
Ysgrifennydd yr Wrthblaid ar gyfer Llywodraeth Leol

Mr Vaughan Gething AM
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services
National Assembly for Wales
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Cc: Mr Gary Doherty; Chief Executive; Betsi Cadwalader
University HB; Ysbyty Gwynedd; Penrhosgarnedd,
Bangor; Gwynedd; LL57 2PW

Dear Cabinet Secretary, Vaughan,

I have been in contact with the British Society for Rheumatology (BSR), who a professional, clinically-led society are representing healthcare professionals working in rheumatology and musculoskeletal services, regarding rheumatology provision in North West Wales.

BSR's members, my constituents and I are increasingly worried about the shortfall in the rheumatology workforce in the Llandudno General Hospital. Previously, Llandudno General Hospital was seen as the practice that lead by example for all of Wales to follow, winning the Hospital Medicine Rheumatology Department of the Year award in 2007. However, our members who practice at this hospital are facing a workforce crisis – they are stretched, overworked and even being forced out of retirement. I understand BSR contacted Mr Gary Doherty, Chief Executive of the local trust regarding this issue, but have had no response from him.

As I understand, the current provision is a consultant rheumatologist, who is leaving in November and another consultant who has been forced out of retirement out of concern for their patients, who is about to go on a three month sabbatical and finally a locum rheumatologist, who is about to leave their post. Therefore there will be no permanent rheumatologist serving at Llandudno hospital from November onwards, which serves a population of over 200,000. As we head into the winter months, this must be seen as a priority. The department has had long term vacancies and consultants working beyond contractual requirements. While a locum is currently in place, the staff in this department feel unsupported with no plan for the medium to long term.

[cont.]

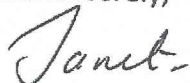


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The British Society for Rheumatology believes, along with the Royal College of Physicians, that having the full rheumatology Multi-Disciplinary Team in place, consisting of consultant rheumatologists, trainees, specialist nurses, AHPs and GPs with a special interest is vital, and recommend that there is one full time rheumatologist per 86,000 population. Evidently, in Bangor and further afield in the North of Wales, this guidance is not being followed, to the detriment of the health of many adults in the region.

I would be most grateful to understand the views of the Health Board regarding the current level of provision available to the welsh population, the efforts being made to fill vacancies as well as the long term succession plans for the workforce who are planning on leaving or going back into retirement. Along with BSR, I am keen to work with you in any way we can in order to help address the challenges that the region is currently facing.

Yours sincerely,



Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC