

Llais Gwent Region – Report for Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Public Board Meeting.

March 2025



To inform Aneurin Bevan University Health Board of current issues of concern, and positive observations, or public feedback being addressed by Llais Gwent Region in relation to the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

01633 838516

gwentenquiries@llaiscymru.org

Llais Gwent Region,
Raglan House,
William Brown Close
Cwmbran
NP44 3AB

www.llaiswales.org

www.llaiscymru.org

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About Llais



We believe in a healthier Wales where people get the health and social care services, they need in a way that works best for them.

We are here to understand your views and experiences of health and social care, and to make sure decision-makers use your feedback to shape your services.

We seek out both good and bad stories so we understand what works well and how services may need to get better. And we look to particularly talk to those whose voices are not often heard.

We also talk to people about their views and experiences by holding events in your local communities or visiting you wherever you're receiving your health or social care service.

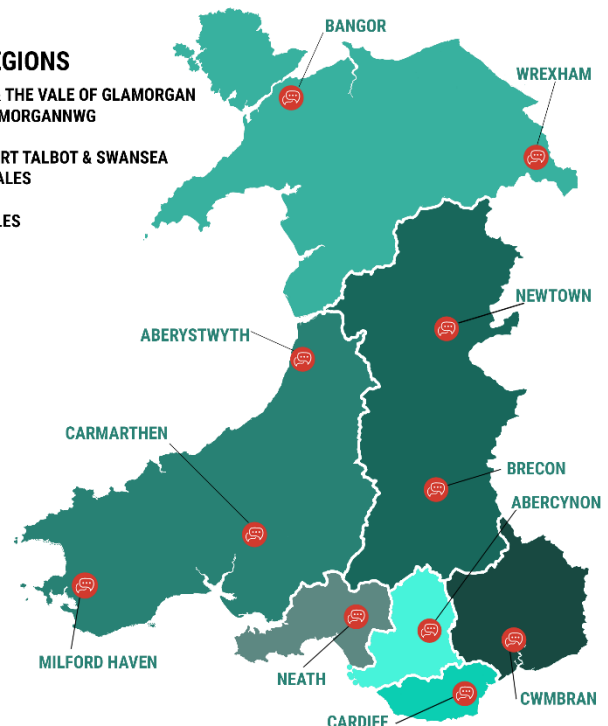
We also work with community and interested groups and in line with national initiatives to gather people's views.

And when things go wrong, we support you to make complaints.

There are 7 Llais Regions in Wales. Each one represents the "patient and public" voice in different parts of Wales.

LLAIS REGIONS

- CARDIFF & THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN
- CWM TAF MORGANNWG
- GWENT
- NEATH PORT TALBOT & SWANSEA
- NORTH WALES
- POWYS
- WEST WALES



Introduction



The purpose of this report is to inform Aneurin Bevan University Health Board of current issues of concern and positive observations, and public feedback being addressed by Llais Gwent Region in relation to the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

Llais continues to work in respect of engaging with the population, scrutinising, and offering independent challenge to the NHS and social care, to monitor and consider routine and urgent service changes. We also continue to provide independent Complaints Advocacy Service.

A National Conversation: Llais strategic plan 2024-2027



We now have our first national strategic plan. This plan has been created using what we have been told by the people of Wales, by our staff and volunteers and other bodies and groups we work with.

When this plan was being created, we thought about our legal duties and responsibilities such as the Quality and Engagement Act 2020, Equality Act 2010, The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, The Welsh Language Standards 2016, The Socio-Economic Duty, the Public Sector Duty, and national plans and commitments such as the LGBTQ+ and the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, as well as our remit letter.

Building on what we have learned in our first year, we have grouped things into five main priorities:¹

- 1) Drive a national conversation about the future of health and social care services
- 2) Push for services that meet everyone's needs.
- 3) Work together better.
- 4) Help people and services to use technology in ways that work for them.
- 5) Grow and improve as an organisation.

¹ <https://www.llaiswales.org/about-us/national-conversation-llais-strategic-plan-2024-2027>



Local activities and feedback:

1. Gwent Advocacy Service

There were 114 contacts in January and February. 71 were formal concerns and 46 were enquiries that required early resolution.

Of the 114 contacts, 33 have now been resolved and 81 are still active.

Health & Social Care Services:

- **GP services** (39 contacts), Access to timely appointments, attitude, services provided being inadequate, prescription issues, lack of available appointments.
- **Secondary Care services** (28 contacts), Waiting times, lack of care, biopsies result not received, midwifery.
- **The Grange University Hospital** (12 contacts), Communication, A&E waiting times, cancelled operation, lack of care and compassion, wait on the back of an ambulance.
- **Mental Health Services** (11 contacts) - lack of support, record keeping, feeling unsafe in MH wards, lack of referral
- **Dental Services** (5 contacts), treatment received, practice closure.
- **Pharmacy** (4 contacts) - timely prescriptions, incorrect medicines issued.
- **ABUHB** (3 Contacts) – Complaints procedure not followed, lack of information.
- **Social Services** (11 Contacts) – lack of person-centred care, no care package, children services.
- **Opticians** (1 Contact) - lack of referral for cataract.

2. Representations

Due to the intensity of representations made throughout January and February, we have included further detail throughout the report to provide clarity around how people and community voices are being heard and shaping health and social care change.

3. Primary Care Services

In February 2025, Llais made a number of representations and conducted a series of on-site engagements at various GP Practices across Gwent, to gather feedback from the community regarding their experiences with accessing services.

This was driven by us being made aware of concerns about access to GP services towards the end of 2024 by people and communities. Of particular concern were issues reported to us relating to practices managed by the GP Partnership of Dr Ahmed and Dr Allinson, and E-Harley Street Primary Care Solutions – a management company set up by the GP partners with responsibility for the administration of their practices.

We carried out on-site engagement at the following GP sites:

- 1) Pontypool Medical Centre (Main Surgery)
- 2) Pontypool Medical Centre (New Inn Surgery)
- 3) Pontypool Medical Centre (Goytre Surgery)
- 4) Bevan Health & Wellbeing Centre (Tredeggar Medical Practice)
- 5) Blaenavon Medical Practice
- 6) Lliswerry Medical Centre
- 7) Rhymney Integrated Health & Social Care Centre (Meddygfa Cwm Rhymni Practice)
- 8) Meddygfa Gelligaer Surgery
- 9) Bryntirion Surgery
- 10) Markham Medical Centre

Using people's voices, we collated the information received and made representations to the Primary Care Team:

1) Self-check-in machines:

Whilst engaging with people at GP Practices, there were some practices where the self-check-in machines were not in operation, meaning there were long queues at the reception desk. What is the plan moving forward regarding effective use of the self-check-in machines?

Response:

- Self-check-in machines are not a contractual requirement for GP practices; however, they recognise their potential to improve patient experience and reduce workload on reception teams.
- For the five practices that are going to be managed by the Health Board, these machines will be reinstated.
- Link in with the Neighbourhood Care Network teams to support and encourage practices in Gwent to consider their utilisation, where they are not already in operation.

2) Access to appointments:

Access to appointments via telephone was the main area of concern for people across all of the GP practices we went to. People told us of the long wait in queues and when they got through, quite often, all appointments had gone, meaning they would have to do this all over again the next morning.

- Is there a requirement for people to call at 08:00 am for a same day/routine appointment?
- Are people able to go to their surgery in person and book an appointment?
- What are your plans to improve people's access to appointments?

Response:

- Access to GP Services is a key priority. Even though the nationally agreed access standards are being met in the practices we visited, they will review systems and process, particularly for the five practices that are returning to Health Board management.
- Their goal is to ensure the right blend of access options is available for the patient population.
- Committed to developing a Patient Participation Group (PPG) in each practice and would welcome Llais representation in these groups.

3) NHS App:

Are you going to extend full access to the NHS App for these surgeries, to enable people to book appointments with clinicians?

Response:

- The recently announced GMS contract for Wales emphasised the need to improve the uptake and access to NHS Wales services, including the use of the NHS Wales App and the requirement for GP practices to enable the repeat prescribing function.
- The new contract will also require practices to assist patients with Welsh Identity Verification Service (WIVS), which supports the onboarding for patients for the NHS Wales app.
- The Health Board will continue to promote the use of the NHS Wales App and explore the full range of services that can be enabled through it.

We will continue our on-site engagement at General Practices across Gwent to understand people's experience in order to early identify good practice and areas that require improvement.

4. Mental Health Services

During 2024-25 Mental Health Services has been a regional priority for Gwent. Llais has carried out a mix of formal and informal engagement and surveys to capture voices of staff working within the field and people and communities. Our findings note:

- Inpatient Mental Health Engagement

In February 2025, Llais conducted on-site engagements at several inpatient mental health wards in Gwent.

As one of our regional priorities is Mental Health Services, our aim was to understand people's experiences of receiving care and treatment as an inpatient.

To gather insights, we visited the following sites:

- 1) St Cadoc's Hospital, Adferiad Ward
- 2) Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, Carn-Y-Cefn Ward
- 3) Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Ty Cyfannol Ward
- 4) Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Annwylfan Ward

Overall, most people across the four wards were happy with their inpatient experience. For future engagements, Llais would consider

visiting during activities to interact with people when they are relaxed and more likely to converse.

We had no representations to make as a result of our engagement, but asked the Health Board to share our summary report with the relevant staff for information

Key findings from our engagement were:

- 1) Unhealthy Menu (St Cadoc's Hospital, Adferiad Ward)
- 2) A pile-up of cigarette ends (St Cadoc's Hospital, Adferiad Ward & Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Ty Cyfannol Ward)
- 3) A need for more psychological support and support staff (Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Annwylfan Ward)

- **Mental Health Survey**

In December, we circulated a survey to find out people's experiences of accessing Mental Health Services in Gwent. In total, 25 people shared their experiences with us, age ranging from 16 – 87.

There was a mix of experiences among respondents. Many individuals expressed frustration with the accessibility and efficiency of services, particularly emergency mental health services, which often require navigating through GPs for referrals. Long waiting times and inconsistent communication were common concerns, with some people highlighting the lack of direct contact options and the need for a more streamlined triage system. Additionally, there were concerns about the quality of care, such as inexperienced carers and the need for more specialised support, especially for conditions like autism spectrum disorder.

Some people told us about their satisfactory experiences, particularly with specific services like 111 Option 2 and counselling sessions. These services were praised for their helpfulness and the positive impact they had on individuals' mental health. However, the overall sentiment suggests a need for significant improvements in accessibility, communication, and the quality of care provided by mental health services to better meet the needs of the community.

5. Engagement in Gwent (January - February)

In January, we hosted a stakeholder event “Until it happens to me...” to showcase our 2024-25 work in the health and social care sector. We highlighted the impact we made and shared real-life experiences of those who accessed our services, with insights from our volunteers.

We covered our three priorities for 2024-25 and the work that we had carried out, and plan to carry out until March 2025.

80 Professionals shared their experiences and discussed needed improvements for 2025 and beyond, it was a great opportunity to build relationships and explore different ways of future collaborative working.

Link for [findings](#)

a) Llais Local – Usk & Goytre

We focussed our “Llais Local” engagement in Usk and Goytre in Monmouthshire, to strengthen community voice and experiences of health and social care services. We engaged with 73 individuals in community spaces, and support groups. Our approach is to listen to people and use what they’ve told us to influence change (*we listen, you said, we did*).

We attended the following venues:

- Warm Space
- Usk Library
- Baby & Toddler Group x2
- Climate Café
- Café Melin

We are collating the experiences and stories people told us and will share this with NHS and Social Care providers by the end of March 2025.

Early insights:

“My husband was admitted to GUH after a 999 call. The ambulance service was great – came within 30 minutes of calling 999. The hand over in the Medical Assessment Unit did take a whole morning but my husband was receiving pain relief and IVF fluids. He was released the following day as a virtual inpatient. This meant that he didn’t have to join

a list as an outpatient for scans. Clearly this excellent system can only work with patients who are well enough to be at home”

“Recently had to attend A&E and had a horrible experience. It was crowded with hardly anywhere to sit. Had to wait 12+ hours on hard uncomfortable chairs. Once seen the care was fab but something needs to be done about waiting times!”

“I cannot fault the experience I have with the Usk and Raglan district nurses. For the last 13 months I have developed painful bedsores, the nurses visit me twice a week to treat and change the dressing. The care they show is immense. They are friendly and the medical knowledge I feel is very underrated.”

6. Upcoming Activities

1) Public Forum: Help Llais Grow your voice

In March we are going to start a series of “new look, new feel” to our public fora, to drive a national conversation about the future of health and social care services.

Through active participation and active listening our ask is “Help Llais Grow Your Voice” – people in communities can participate by planting seeds, symbolising the growth and transformation needed to improve health and social care services through meaningful conversations.

2) Presentations

In March, we are receiving presentations on the following hot topics:

- ABUHB Integrated Medium Term Plan
- WAST Service Performance and Activities

National Work:

1. Same Day Urgent Care Project

Over the past year, Llais has been hearing a lot about the challenges people face when needing emergency healthcare in Wales.

Over 5 weeks starting in late September 2024, our teams visited 42 hospitals across Wales, including Minor Injury Units, Medical Assessment Units, and Emergency Departments, to gather people's experiences. We also conducted an online survey and focus groups. In total, we heard from over 700 people about their emergency health care experiences.

We have submitted our [position statement](#) and [full report](#) to health boards across Wales for response to representations including future service improvements.

2. Social Care Research

In February, Llais commissioned a research project to The Stop, Collaborate and Listen Agency to build a clearer picture of social care provision across Wales. The work focussed on understating regional variations, identifying barriers to effective service delivery, and highlighting areas of good practice.

As part of this research, they gathered insights from service users and care providers through a short survey to understand their experiences, challenges and perspectives.

This research will conclude in March 2025. Findings will be shared to inform future learning, key areas for change and shared good practice.

Thanks



We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and social care services and also sharing their ideas with us.

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

Contact details

Llais Gwent Region,
Raglan House,
Llantarnam Business Park,
Cwmbran,
NP44 3AB.

Telephone: 01633 838516
Email:
gwentenquiries@llaiscymru.org
Website: www.llaiscymru.org
Facebook: @gwentllais
twitter: Llais_wales