

Edwina Hart
Minister for Health
Welsh Assembly Government
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Ty Hywel
Cardiff bay
CF99 1NA

17th July 2009

Dear Ms Hart,

I was pleased to see the announcement of funding for eating disorder services in Wales. Could you let me know whether there are any plans to address the huge gap in services for Deaf people experiencing mental health problems?

This group of people is even less well served than people with an eating disorder (who can, normally, get some kind of care from mental health services). I had hoped that the possible reorganisation of health services might offer a way ahead for small, specialist services. Unfortunately, as things stand, we are left in a situation where the planning populations for LHBs are too small for Deaf patients' needs to be addressed. And, as far as I am aware, there are no contracts in place for in-patient admission to any of the three specialist units in England.

Health services in Scotland are developing rapidly to address their own gap. Hundreds of staff have been on training courses, specialist staff have been recruited and an in-patient ward will soon open. Since the plan commissioned by Jane Hutt was rejected by Brian Gibbons, there appears to have been no change for Deaf people in Wales.

You have previously suggested meeting Marc Boggett, which we would be delighted to do, but only if it is likely to lead to action. I would be interested to know what plans there are in Wales for Deaf mental health services, and whether you feel meeting Mr Boggett may signal the start of some improvement in services for Deaf people in Wales?

Steve Powell
Chief Executive

Edwina Hart AM OStJ MBE

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/05534/09

Your ref:

Mr Steve Powell
SignHealth
5 Baring Road
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- 7 AUG 2009



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Dear Mr Powell -

5 August 2009

Thank you for your letter dated 17 July about services in Wales for deaf people who are experiencing mental health problems.

I welcome your comments and fully agree that we must ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people receive the best quality mental health services possible and other health services.

Ultimately, responsibility for the delivery of equitable health and social care rests with the service providers. The Assembly Government's role is to set the strategic framework, develop policy and provide funding in support of policy. We are committed to improving mental health services in Wales, and to reduce any inequalities experienced by deaf people. Much has already been done to deliver our policies, although I recognise that further improvements are still required.

With that in mind, I recently asked my officials to meet with Richard Williams, Director of the RNID, to discuss how we can improve services for the deaf and hard of hearing with mental health problems. Some of the issues that you have raised were discussed and following that meeting my officials have agreed to assist the RNID to arrange a workshop later this year to raise awareness and discuss these important issues further.

If you would like to be involved in this workshop please contact Richard Williams direct at the RNID.

Edwina Hart

Ms E Hart
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
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Energizing Change

Your ref: EH/05534/09

17 August 2009

Dear Ms Hart

Thank you for your letter of 5 August 2009. I have to say your response is totally inadequate.

There is still no policy on making the current mental health services in Wales accessible to Deaf people. The recommendations in the 2006 report Mental Health Services for Deaf People in Wales, commissioned by Jane Hutt, were subsequently rejected by your predecessor Brian Gibbons. There appears to be no change for Deaf people in Wales.

You say that your officials have agreed to assist the RNID to arrange a workshop later this year to raise awareness and discuss this important issue further. You may wish to know that the report mentioned above involved 10 voluntary sector organisations, seven senior healthcare professionals, three senior social service professionals, five local health board commissioners and three officials from the Welsh Assembly including your Director for Mental Health. The Reference Group took two years to complete their findings, took evidence from hundreds of people, produced recommendations that were extremely cost effective but it was still quashed by your department.

Forgive me if I'm cynical, but it is not another workshop that is required to improve mental health services for Deaf people in Wales, but political will and action.

*Yours sincerely
Steve Powell*

Steve Powell
Chief Executive

Registered charity
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Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
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21 SEP 2009



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September 2009

Dear Mr Powell

Thank you for your letter of 17 August 2009 about mental health services for Deaf people in Wales. I am sorry that you felt the previous reply did not address your concerns.

I am fully committed to improving access to health services for all people within Wales and a number of positive actions have already been undertaken to ensure this. As part of my re-structuring of the NHS in Wales, mental health will have a strengthened presence in the new integrated Local Health Boards (LHBs). For example, the Vice Chair of each LHB will be responsible for ensuring the standard of mental health services is driven up across Wales.

More specifically, my officials are currently working with a number of Deaf charities to improve services for Deaf people in Wales. A Sensory Impairment Healthcare Steering Group and a Reference Group have been set up to look at the issues of access to the NHS in Wales. The first meeting of the Steering Group will take place on 21 September and group membership includes Welsh Assembly Government officials, colleagues from the NHS and the Third Sector. The Reference Group, which will also be meeting in September, will be made up of people who are deaf and/or blind and will include representation from all parts of Wales.

The workshop being organised by my officials in collaboration with the RNID will take place on 3 February 2010; I would expect the workshop to take into account the findings of the 2006 report which you refer to.

Edwina Hart