



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/VG/4235/18

Assembly Members
National Assembly for Wales

4 December 2018

Dear Assembly Members,

My Written Statement of 12 November updated members on maternity services at Cwm Taf University Health Board, including details of the Royal College review I have ordered and the progress the Health Board has been making in its maternity workforce. I was able to provide information to Members at that time about the assurance I had received from the other health boards in Wales. Every health board has confirmed that they have robust reporting mechanisms and governance arrangements in place to deal with adverse clinical events.

I am writing to you today to provide you with information about the level of staffing in maternity services in Wales, other than Cwm Taf.

All health boards are required to use the Birthrate Plus workforce tool to determine the level of midwifery staff to provide care to their maternal population. All health boards have confirmed they are using the tool and are funding the staffing levels recommended for their service. A small number of midwife and maternity support worker vacancies were reported in some health boards and all were actively being recruited to; a small amount of staff turnover is to be expected.

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) recently launched their annual State of Maternity Services Report providing an overview of some of the 'big picture' trends that are taking place in the midwifery workforce and identified some of the challenges that face the profession and maternity services. This year, for the first time, the RCM published individual reports for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, rather than one report for the UK as a whole.

The RCM stated that the midwifery workforce in Wales has risen steadily in recent years. Since 2009, despite a fall at the start of this decade, the number of midwives working in the NHS in Wales has risen by the equivalent of 129 full-time midwives (up 10.6 per cent). In comparison England remains short of midwives, a situation openly acknowledged by the Government. In fact, the RCM's new estimate, based on the number of births last year and the number of staff in post, is that England is short of the equivalent of 3,500 full-time midwives.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Health boards are required to comply with the Royal College of Obstetrician and Gynaecologist standards for consultant obstetrician presence on the labour ward – all but two reported compliance. Both organisations are currently taking steps to increase the hours of consultant presence.

In respect of obstetric staff vacancies, all health boards reported some vacancies at either consultant and/or junior medical staff level. While recruitment is actively underway, it remains a challenge to fill vacancies. There is a UK wide shortage of obstetric medical staff and therefore Wales is not alone in facing challenges with its medical workforce. To ensure services are safe, gaps in rotas including those created by vacancies are covered by locums and agency staff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services