

Jane Hutt AM

SF99-00545

Mr Simon Jones
Chair
Bro Taf Health Authority
Churchill House
Churchill Way
CARDIFF CF1

PROPOSALS TO TRANSFER SERVICES FROM TALYGARN REHABILITATION CENTRE TO THE ROYAL GLAMORGAN HOSPITAL

1. As Assembly Secretary for Health and Social Services, I have completed my consideration of your Authority's proposals to transfer services from the Talygarn Rehabilitation Centre to the Royal Glamorgan Hospital (RGH). These proposals were submitted to the Secretary of State for Wales under cover of your letters of 11 December 1998, and 11 and 20 January 1999 in accordance with the procedures set out in WHC (91) 47 "Substantial Changes in the Use of Health Buildings: Consultation Procedures". By virtue of the operation of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999, the responsibility for making a decision on your Authority's proposals, in accordance with WHC (91) 47, has passed from the Secretary of State for Wales to the National Assembly for Wales. I am duly authorised to make this decision on behalf of the Assembly.

Health Authority Proposals

2. The proposals submitted to the Secretary of State are that all physiotherapy and occupational therapy rehabilitation services currently provided at Talygarn should transfer to the RGH which is now open and operational. The Talygarn estate would become surplus to the Authority's requirements and would be sold, in accordance with established procedures, and the funds returned to the Assembly for use in the all Wales Capital Programme. It is noted that the Taff Ely Local Plan proposes to include a number of conditions on the future use of the Talygarn estate, designed to preserve its special character and atmosphere.

3. Your Authority's proposals are based on the following propositions:

- a) the number of patients being referred to Talygarn has been decreasing year on year so that it is now a local service with the majority of patients seen living in the Taff Ely and Rhondda area. The RGH has the potential to meet the latest and most up to date standards for the provision of rehabilitation services for its local population;
- b) transferring the service from Talygarn to the RGH would lead to an improved and clinically more effective service. The multi-disciplinary service at the RGH would enhance the overall quality of treatment and care of patients. The physical condition of the accommodation at Talygarn is not ideal for the provision of rehabilitation. The modern, purpose-built accommodation at the RGH would be more appropriate.

CHC Response to Consultation

4. The Taff Ely and Rhondda Community Health Council (CHC) has objected to your Authority's proposals to transfer services from Talygarn to the RGH with the subsequent closure of Talygarn. The main grounds for objection are that:

- a) the RGH would only be able to treat about half the patients from Talygarn using current treatment regimes or alternatively, would have to offer treatment on a half day basis instead of a whole day, thereby prolonging long term recovery;
- b) treatment would also be restricted because:
 - not all of the existing equipment from Talygarn could be accommodated at the RGH resulting in the loss of particular exercises;
 - the hydrotherapy pool would be smaller which would curtail group work;
 - there would be almost no open gymnasium space which would curtail activities.

CHC Alternative Proposals

5. WHC(91)47 states that where a CHC wishes to object to a health authority proposal, it should submit detailed alternative proposals. At the time the Taff Ely and Rhondda CHC initially formally objected to your proposals, it stated that it would not be putting forward any alternative proposals. Subsequently it put forward a proposal to develop Talygarn as a centre of excellence for the management of pain to meet patient needs on a regional basis. It further suggested that the grounds at Talygarn be transferred to the local authority for public use and upkeep. A small number of those responding to consultation also put forward the suggestion that Talygarn should be developed into a specialised service centre.

Other Responses to Consultation

6. A number of other objections were received during the public consultation exercise from interested organisation and individuals, including the Talygarn Forum, Talygarn Cricket Club, consultant rheumatologists from the University Hospital of Wales, Llandough Hospital, Caerphilly and District Miners Hospital, East Glamorgan Hospital and Dewi Sant Hospital, former and current patients and local residents. An objection outside the public consultation period was also received from Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. A summary of the objections received is as follows:

- there are a variety of patient needs which would not be met at the RGH
- there would be a reduction in level and quality of service
- patients benefit from the use of the grounds at Talygarn
- the closure and subsequent disposal of Talygarn would mean the loss of a unique community facility

7. Those in support of or who had no objection to the proposed transfer included Gwent Health Authority, Dyfed Powys Health Authority, Iechyd Morgannwg Health Authority, the former Rhondda NHS Trust, the former Llandough and Community NHS Trust, Bro Taf District Medical Committee, Bro Taf Local Medical Committee and the Vale of Glamorgan County Council.

Consideration of the Health Authority's Proposals

8. I have considered all the circumstances of this case including your Authority's submission to the Secretary of State for Wales (and accompanying documentation) and all other relevant information available to me. I have also met with you and the Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust, which would provide the service at the RGH, to allow you an opportunity to reaffirm your Authority's case for the transfer. On similar terms, I have met representatives of those who, in the public consultation exercise, expressed opposition to the transfer, namely, the Taff Ely and Rhondda CHC, the Talygarn Forum and patients, as well as representatives of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (a major stakeholder).

Clinical Effectiveness

9. Your Authority's continuing commitment to the principle of providing rehabilitation services locally, based at District General Hospital (DGH) sites, is noted. Following the Secretary of State's approval in 1992, action was taken to develop rehabilitation services at the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend and Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr to accommodate the transfer of patients from Talygarn Rehabilitation Centre. It was recognised at that time that new purpose-built DGH rehabilitation facilities would not be available for the Taff Ely and Rhondda area until the RGH opened. The

Secretary of State's approval was expressly time-limited to June 1995, and, in the light of legal advice, your Authority has re-consulted on its plans to cease the rehabilitation service at Talygarn and transfer it, with the existing staff, to the RGH and provide what it believes would be an improved and enhanced service. It is also noted that the Taff Ely and Rhondda CHC acknowledge that there would be some benefits in transferring services from Talygarn to the RGH.

- **Reduction in Service**

10. The CHC and other objectors are concerned that the proposal would, if implemented, lead to a reduction in the level and quality of service leading to a prolonged recovery period. It is noted, however, that your Authority intends to size the rehabilitation facilities at the RGH to meet the needs of the local Taff Ely and Rhondda population whose needs, in some respects, are different from the needs of those for whom Talygarn was originally set up. It is also noted that your Authority has confirmed that any patient requiring the type of intensive therapy being provided at Talygarn would continue to receive it at the RGH. It is noted that the hydrotherapy pool and gymnasium facilities planned for the RGH are smaller than those at Talygarn but your Authority is satisfied that no patient will be clinically disadvantaged in that respect. It is further noted that the Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust (the Trust) , which would provide the service at the RGH, has developed plans to expand the available gymnasium space in response to concerns expressed by some of those opposed to the transfer. Also, the hydrotherapy pool at the RGH has some additional features not available at Talygarn.

11. It is noted that patients at Talygarn who require rehabilitation support services such as clinical psychology, radiology, trauma and orthopedics or other professional support have to be transferred elsewhere. Transferring the rehabilitation service to the RGH could be expected to result in much improved access to these support services and so provide greater opportunities for a multi-disciplinary approach to rehabilitation of patients. It is noted that the staff currently providing the service at Talygarn would transfer to the RGH to ensure continuity of care for patients.

- **Some patient needs not met**

12. The findings of the expert clinical review commissioned by your Authority are noted. The review's overall conclusion was that it was not only reasonable but also important to consider transferring services to the RGH. It is accepted that while the service being provided at Talygarn does meet some patient needs, the circumstances are not ideal; for example, wheelchair access is poor. The Talygarn Centre provides treatment which can be re-provided on a DGH site and patients would not, therefore, be disadvantaged by the proposed transfer to the RGH.

13. The grounds at Talygarn are widely used and enjoyed by patients. Your Authority has said that it expects the extensive grounds at the RGH to be used in a similar way.

14. It is also noted that the independent review, commissioned on behalf of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organization (CISWO), was unconvinced that the proposed transfer would lead to an improved service. It recommended that, if the transfer were to

take place, the Trust management should work closely with all concerned to ensure that the rehabilitation service continued to be seen as a separate entity and was not eroded by other departments.

Value for Money

15. It is noted that your Authority's main grounds for the transfer are clinical. You have, however, stated that there are financial grounds to support your case too. Your Authority estimates that the cost of running the service at the RGH would provide a revenue saving of £0.158million per year which is intended to be reinvested in the RGH.

Conclusions

16. I have carefully considered your Authority's proposals to transfer services from Talygarn Rehabilitation Centre to the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, together with the CHC's response to your consultation document on the proposal and its alternative proposal to develop Talygarn as a regional centre of excellence. I have also taken account of the views of expert advisers and other clinicians as well as the views of consultees, such as the Talygarn Forum, made available to me.
17. I am satisfied that transferring the rehabilitation service from Talygarn to the RGH would lead to an overall improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. This would be achieved through the establishment of a fully multi-disciplinary service able to meet the needs of the Taff Ely and Rhondda population, providing improved access for patients to other clinical and professional support services. The modern, purpose-built facilities at the RGH would be better suited to the provision of rehabilitation than those at Talygarn. The expanded gymnasium space proposed by the Trust, which I am assured would be provided were the transfer to take place, would help alleviate some of the concerns of those opposed to the transfer. Although the revenue savings which would be realised would be relatively small, the transfer, nonetheless, represents good value for money.
18. I am not persuaded by the argument that Talygarn should be developed as a specialised regional centre and am not convinced that the development of such services separately from the main centres of medical and rehabilitation services would represent best clinical practice. The proposal, which has not been worked up in detail, would require significant but unquantifiable additional capital investment which is unlikely to be a priority in the foreseeable future. Nor is there any evidence that the relevant health authorities would be in a position to accept the recurrent revenue implications of such a development from a service which they are satisfied is better provided locally. In addition, it would have the effect of undermining the investment already made in developing an improved range of local rehabilitation facilities and services at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital and other DGHs.

Decision

19. For the reasons given above, I have decided to approve the proposals Bro Taf Health Authority made to the Secretary of State for Wales under cover of your letters of 11 December 1998, 11 and 20 January 1999, that rehabilitation services at Talygarn should cease and transfer to the RGH, which is now open and operational.

Implementation

20. The transfer of the service from Talygarn should not take place until the additional gymnasium space planned by the Trust is available. In implementing the transfer of services from Talygarn to the RGH, I would expect your Authority and the Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust to make every effort to minimize disruption to patients and to liaise closely with staff, patients, the CHC and local residents, over progress in implementation. Local residents and the Talygarn Forum should be kept informed and wherever possible, involved with developments on the disposal of the site. Your Authority and the Trust should bear in mind the recommendations made in the report commissioned by CISWO in implementing the transfer and, more generally, when planning and delivering rehabilitation services for the Bro Taf population in the future.
21. The Assembly must be kept regularly informed of progress and formally notified when the proposals have been fully implemented.
22. A copy of this letter goes to local Assembly Members and Members of Parliament, Taff Ely and Rhondda CHC, local Health Authorities and NHS trusts, interested bodies, local authorities, the Talygarn Forum and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

Jane Hutt AM



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

Ref: SF-99-00545

Ysgrifennydd y Cynulliad · Assembly Secretary

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14
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Yours sincerely,

Jane Hutt