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Dyddiad / Date: 5th October 2021

Dear Sarah

Re: Proposed Closure of Gresford Medical Centre

Thank you for your letter of 2nd September 2021 regarding Alyn Family Doctors and the practice's proposal to close their branch site in Gresford.

I am able to confirm that Alyn Family Doctors have now submitted their formal application to permanently close the Gresford branch and this is being considered as per the process described in my response to question 4 below.

Prior to submitting their application, the practice conducted a consultation with their Gresford registered patients and the Gresford Community Council. They have also carried out a detailed equality impact assessment in order to assess adverse consequences for patients. In response to their consultation, the practice received 61 responses in total, of which 10 were broadly positive, citing the increased appointment numbers.

Alyn Family Doctors are aware that the question of 'why Gresford over Rossett' has been raised by some patients. In response to this, the practice has informed us of their reasoning, as follows:

- Rossett Surgery has more space available to the practice than Gresford, including much more administrative staff space. It has three clinical rooms, but also has room for a dispensary and a further eight members of administrative staff. It also has more potential for expansion if needed. This is because the entirety of the building is operated by the practice, whereas Gresford Health Centre is shared with BCUHB community services.
- Rossett Surgery houses the practice's dispensary, which can only be operated from this site due to the regulations around GP dispensing.
- Rossett Surgery supports a wider geographic area, with the practice boundary stretching up to Pulford, Dodleston and Belgrave.
- Rossett Surgery is owned outright by the Partners of the practice whereas Gresford Health Centre is a Health Board-owned and operated building.

As you will be aware, the practice has not been operating from Gresford since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic when they were granted approval by the Health Board to temporary close to ensure the safety of patients and staff. In their efforts to mitigate the impact of the temporary closure to their patients, the practice increased its access at Rossett surgery to full-time which in turn has increased its ability to offer more appointments overall. Prior to the pandemic, the practice were offering on average nine GP sessions and four nurse sessions at Gresford.

The practice have also informed us that, prior to the temporary closure, the Gresford site was less utilised than Llay and Rossett. As part of their application to close Gresford, the practice undertook a usage review of the site in the three years up to March 2020. Of the 3,742 resident in Gresford and Marford, the attendance rate dropped from 952 to 785 from 2018/19 to 2019/20. In terms of the regular attenders (greater than two consultations per year), 82 patients exclusively attended Gresford more than once per year in 2019/20. Of the 82, 78 (95% attended a face-to-face consultation in Llay or Rossett during the following year.

In response to the specific questions raised in your letter, I can confirm the following:

1. What is BCUHB's responsibility to provide adequate primary care to patients?

We have a responsibility to ensure that all our residents have access to GMS services, whether that is provided by an independent contractor or through a managed practice. There are no regulations that stipulate geographical boundaries for practice populations or requirements to have practices or surgeries located in specific areas / towns / villages.

2. How can BCUHB uphold their health obligation to Gresford patients if the surgery is closed?

If the Gresford surgery is closed, then the patients will continue to be able to access services from Alyn Family Doctors at the other two sites. If they live within the boundary of another practice then patients also have the option to register there.

3. What is BCUHB's remit for scrutinising and enforcing the GP contract?

The contract for provision of GMS services is between the Health Board and the Independent contractor. The Health Board monitors and manages the contract. Any contractual changes have to be agreed with the Health Board and the Health Board undertakes various reviews, such as an annual contract review, to assess compliance with contractual requirements. Other ad hoc reviews may be conducted in year.

Any potential breaches of contract in year are dealt with as and when they arise. We work to support contractors to resolve issues in the first instance, however, should there be a direct contract breach then a remedial and/or breach notice can be issued.

4. What is BCUHB's position on the closure of the Gresford surgery?

We note the formal application to close this branch. That application contains details of the practice's reasons for wanting to close the branch, an equality impact assessment, and a comprehensive report from the community health council on the patient engagement undertaken by the practice, including the detail of the patient responses received. The practice has also provided responses to the issues raised by patients.

This application is now being reviewed under the Service Change Protocol agreed between the Health Board and the Community Health Council, and will be presented to the Health Board's Primary Care Panel for consideration following completion of that process. An update will be provided to the November meeting of the Primary Care Panel.

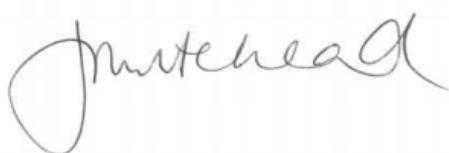
5. If Alyn Family Doctors no longer wishes to provide a primary care service from Gresford, would BCUHB support the appointment of another GP group (partnership or salaried)?

If the application to close the branch is approved, the Alyn Family Doctors partnership will continue to provide services covering Gresford. The Health Board is not currently considering increasing GMS provision in this area.

I fully appreciate the anxiety that the proposed closure of the Gresford branch surgery may cause some patients. Please be assured that the Primary Care Panel will consider the application carefully, taking into account the comments received as part of the consultation exercise and the findings from the equality impact assessment.

I hope that my response above provides further clarity to the issues raised. Please do not hesitate to contact me again if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely



Jo Whitehead PSM
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive