

Response from Chris Mann, Chair of Powys LHB to Phil Morris ("Friends" of Builth Hospital).

Builth Hospital Casualty Closure (10/11/06)

13 November 2006

Dear Phil,

Both I, Andy Williams and the Board have placed great emphasis on communication throughout Powys. I have addressed many meetings, large and small, in every part of Powys, including Builth Wells. You are also aware of the LHB's decision at its meeting on 27 September that draft consultation paper be prepared and issued, subject to consideration by the Board at its meeting on 29 November.

But there is always the need, for operational and patient safety reasons, to make urgent decisions without consultation being appropriate. The decision in respect of the MIU is just such a decision. I have had detailed and specific factors brought to my attention (and also to medical staff in Builth Wells) which indicates very clearly that the decision had to be made urgently due to strong concerns about patient safety.

You will know from your long experience in local government dealing with personnel issues that it is difficult to give specific information due to issues of confidentiality; there is also specific patient confidentiality. If this had not been addressed and there were any further incidents you would be amongst the first to criticize the LHB for not taking appropriate action sooner. In such circumstances you would be right.

Clearly in taking such decisions there is the risk of being wrongly interpreted as it being related to some closure or downgrading programme. This is absolutely not the case. But even though there was this risk in this case the LHB will not back off from patient safety decisions because of fearing the reaction.

I and the Board are also committed to improving health for all patients in Powys and will engage further with people once the draft consultation paper has been agreed. I have known you for over 20 years and you know that personally I have always been open and honest in all I say and do; this continues in my work with the LHB. Even though you or others may disagree with what the Board does this does not mean it is being dishonest or secretive – I wouldn't allow the Board to operate in such a way. But I and professional staff have also to ensure confidentiality is appropriately maintained in the interests of the individuals concerned.

I hope that you continue to express your thoughts to me; you know I have always responded to any issues on any matters that you have raised as I have respect for your views and commitment.

Chris Mann