



NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH WATCHDOG REACTS TO REPORT ON NORTH WALES VASCULAR SERVICES

The independent health services watchdog for North Wales – the North Wales Community Health Council (NWCHC) has today commented on the recent publication of the latest report into the regions vascular services.

In advance of tomorrow’s special meeting of the Betsi Cadwaladar University Health Board (BCHUB) – arranged urgently to discuss the findings of the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) Invited Review of Vascular Services in North Wales - NWCHC gave its views and outlined the actions it had taken immediately following the release of the critical report.

Mr Geoff Ryall-Harvey, Chief Officer for NWCHC said ‘The RSC report highlights and confirms the concerns about patient safety first raised by the NWCHC in Spring 2020 following our Safe Space public and patient engagement exercise. The NWCHC believes that recommendations in both the report and a previous report by RCS in 2021, are timely and appropriate’.

We acknowledge the recent assurances given by the Health Board but we believe that BCUHB needs to set out publically its detailed plans and timelines (including short, medium and long-term milestones) for the safeguarding of patients whilst the services move towards addressing the recommendations of the RCS report. We hope to hear from the Health Board in this respect at its meeting on the 15th February.’

Mr Ryall-Harvey went on to say, ‘The National Vascular Registry recently reported that BCUHB had the 4th highest mortality rate for elective AAA repair in the UK. The NWCHC suggests that, until these issues have been addressed and significant improvement has been achieved, BCUHB should explore sending the most complex and highest risk vascular patients directly to Liverpool,

Chester or another appropriate service. We believe that this would improve patient confidence until the necessary improvements have been made and shown to be effective. We would hope that Welsh Government would provide all necessary assistance to take such action. The Health Minister has already indicated that she is considering placing BCUHB in Special Measures in relation to vascular services. The NWCHC has written to her to support this proposal, we believe it will provide the support and the impetus needed to address the long-standing problems affecting the service.'

'We wrote to the Health Minister in May 2021 following the publication of the first RCS report expressing the NWCHC's concerns about the disappointingly slow progress of BCUHB Vascular Services. In that letter the NWCHC requested the Minister's personal oversight of the nine urgent recommendations to address patient safety risks set out in the RCS report in order to ensure progress and to safeguard vulnerable patients using the service. Progress over the past two years has been disappointingly slow. The NWCHC wishes to see action on all RCS recommendations proceeding at an accelerated pace now that the key issues have been clearly identified.'

North Wales CHC states that it has also asked Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the General Medical Council (GMC) to look into these issues as a matter of urgency. There is considerable local concern about the number of amputations taking place and some evidence that it is considerably in excess of national norms. The NWCHC has tried to obtain figures through BCUHB and Artificial Limb & Appliance Centre in North Wales but has been denied the information. The RCS report highlights at least one unnecessary amputation amongst the 44 cases reviewed. The NWCHC says that it would like to see the true picture on amputations established and the setting up of a detailed review of amputations and their clinical pathways.

Jackie Allen, NWCHC Chair stated 'The NWCHC wishes to see action on all RCS recommendations proceeding at an accelerated pace now that the key issues have been clearly identified. We commend the plan to undertake an audit of the quality of patient notes and documentation of patient consent across the Health Board. Whilst the NWCHC is a lay organisation, we regard good record-keeping as fundamental to safe care. We believe that the issue of consent should be included in the subsequent review. Informed consent is a legal requirement and it should highlight potential risks and benefits of any procedure. Without meticulous record-keeping it is difficult to evidence that informed consent has

taken place and that the patient is fully aware and has understood what is involved.’

NWCHC will be in attendance at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Health Board on Tuesday 15th February 2022 at 10.30am. Further details of the meeting can be found at

[Health Board Meetings - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-board-meetings-betsi-cadwaladr-university-health-board)

Note for editors

1 North Wales Community Health Council (CHC) is an independent statutory organisation which represents the interests of patients and the public in the National Health Service in North Wales. It came into being on 1 April 2010 as part of the reorganization of health services in Wales and covers the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Môn. The six counties have a combined population of around 675,500.

2 The Community Health Council has six local committees, one covering each of the six counties. Each local committee comprises members drawn from three sources: councillors nominated by the relevant local authority, people nominated by the local voluntary sector organizations and local people appointed by Welsh Assembly Government.

More information

For more information or an interview with Geoff Ryall- Harvey or Jackie Allen please contact: North Wales CHC, tel: 01248 679284 or Email: carol.williams63@wales.nhs.uk

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