



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1294
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/02910/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

14 October 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 3 August regarding a petition (P-06-1294) for improved metastatic breast cancer care.

I am committed to improving cancer outcomes and care in Wales. Our approach has been set out in the Quality Statement for Cancer. This includes the expectation that the cancer workforce is planned to meet forecast demand, specifically clinical and medical oncology, cancer nurse specialists, medical physics and therapeutic radiographers. We are working with the NHS through its planning and accountability processes to ensure this is the case.

My expectation is that cancer services are planned and delivered in line with professional standards. We have set out in a series of nationally optimised pathways, what should happen when a patient enters a cancer pathway. People presenting with metastatic breast cancer should be supported by a multi-professional team with specialist nursing input as needed. Everyone presenting with cancer should receive holistic needs assessment to ensure they have the support they need. However, it is for health boards and trusts to allocate their available workforce according to their population need.

It is not the Welsh Government's role to specify which conditions should benefit from dedicated specialist nursing support. I am very conscious that any cancer can metastasise, and access to specialist nursing in this circumstance is not an issue that is confined to breast cancer. It is important that services are equitable for people with different cancers and making commitments regarding metastatic breast cancer cannot come at the expense of supporting all those living with any cancer.

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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 Education and Improvement Wales is leading the development of a national workforce plan for nursing to achieve a more sustainable nursing workforce. This plan will enable a targeted approach to workforce solutions in identified priority areas. A core element of developing the nursing workforce plan is the mapping and analysis of the current nursing workforce. This will improve intelligence around the current allocation of the nursing workforce. I look forward to receiving a draft plan at the start of 2023 and would encourage stakeholders to take part in the engagement and consultation processes to contribute their views on the development of specialist nursing for cancer.

I also recognise that a key part of the issue is the lack of accessible data on metastatic breast cancer care, which could be used to improve service planning and delivery. This is one of the reasons why I was happy to provide additional funding to the national clinical audit programme, to introduce an audit of primary and secondary breast cancer care. This audit is due to commence next year and will provide insights into the care received by people with breast cancer to support improved service delivery. I understand the latest Cancer Patient Experience Survey will also provide results relating to metastatic disease. In addition, the new cancer information system that is being introduced to replace the Cancer Network Information System Cymru will have enhanced functionality that will allow better routine use of data relating to metastatic cancer.

I hope this information is helpful to your Committee's consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services