

Vivienne Harpwood, Cadeirydd / Chair
Ffôn / Phone: 01874 712502
E-bost / Email: vivienne.harpwood@wales.nhs.uk

Carol Shillabeer, Y Prif Weithredwr /
Chief Executive
Ffôn / Phone: 01874 712659
E-bost / Email: carol.shillabeer2@wales.nhs.uk



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Bwrdd Iechyd
Addysgu Powys
Powys Teaching
Health Board

9th September 2020

Professor Chris Jones
Dirprwy Brif Swyddog Meddygol
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
Welsh Government

Dear Professor Jones,

Abortion – Covid-19 – Approval for Mifepristone to Be Taken At Home

Thank you for your letter dated 2nd September 2020 in relation to the above. Powys Teaching Health Board currently commissions abortion care services for all women who require access to this service directly from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). This organisation has developed and implemented a national response to the above legislation in order to provide clients with access to a home termination service titled 'Pills by Post'. The Health Board has worked closely with the BPAS team throughout to ensure the continued access, safety and efficacy of this provision for Powys clients.

Data provided from this organisation has provided assurance that waiting times to access services has significantly reduced following the implementation of 'Pills by Post' with average wait time of less than one day now being achieved compared to the previous average of 8 days. This can be attributed to the increase in teleconsultations to 97% from the pre-COVID level of 20% preserving dedicated face to face consultations to those with clinical need necessitating a physical consultation. This increased ease of access has also facilitated a reduction in gestational age at the point of care provision from a previous average of 8.1 weeks at the end of March 2020 to 6.8 weeks by mid-May, with 90% of Powys clients utilising early medical abortion services.

Since the implementation of these changes BPAS has recorded a small number of clients who have passed a fetus of a greater gestational age than estimated by the last menstrual period with one case being over 24

Pencadlys
Tŷ Glasbury, Ysbyty Bronllys,
Aberhonddu, Powys LD3 0LU
Ffôn: 01874 711661



Headquarters
Glasbury House, Bronllys Hospital
Brecon, Powys LD3 0LU
Tel: 01874 711661

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg
Byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg heb oedi
Bwrdd Iechyd Addysgu Powys yw enw gweithredd
Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Addysgu Powys



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We will respond in Welsh without delay
Powys Teaching Health Board is the operational name of
Powys Teaching Local Health Board

weeks gestation. The incidence of this has been reported to be 0.01% of cases. This risk has been reported previously through the 'No Surprises' route. BPAS are undertaking serious incident reviews and thematic learning of all incidents in a process agreed by regulators and we expect full implementation of identified actions to further improve the safety of this provision including a review of the guidance regarding indications for the requirement of ultra sound scanning. The result of this has been a documented further decrease in the rate of adverse incidents. It is important to note that no such adverse events have been identified in relation to Powys Teaching Health Board.

Consideration is also required to be given to maintaining robust and effective pathways and processes to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns including domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation. BPAS has provided assurance that all clients are screened for domestic abuse and that remote service provision is effectively supporting victims of abuse with an increase in referrals to outside agencies of above 50%. It is vital that this continues and emphasis is placed on supporting those at risk.

Overall the development of remote access has been overwhelmingly positive. It has enabled a vital service to continue in challenging times, ensuring women can access care in a timely manner, close to home and a reduction in barriers to exercising their reproductive options.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Shillabeer', written in a cursive style.

Carol Shillabeer
Chief Executive