



CYNGOR IECHYD CYMUNED  
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

HYWEL DDA

# **Meddygfa Emlyn Practice**

Visit report

**August 2019**

# **Contents**

	<b>Page No</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What we did</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What people told us</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Summing up</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Meddygfa Emlyn Practice response</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Contact us</b>	<b>26</b>

## About Hywel Dda Community Health Council (CHC)

We represent independently and without bias the interests of patients and the public in the way that NHS services are planned and provided across the counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.

Our volunteer members who live in the communities we serve are supported by a small team of staff who work together to:

- Carry out regular visits to health services talking to the people using the service and the people providing the care to influence the changes that can make a big difference;
- Get involved with health service managers when they are planning service developments and larger scale service change to emphasise the patient view right from the start;
- Provide free and confidential support through complaints advocacy if things go wrong and if the health service complaints process isn't working;
- Reach out more widely to patients and their families across communities to provide information, and to gather views and experiences so that we can represent your interests to health service managers and to policy makers.

## Background

Meddygfa Emlyn is a GP Surgery in Newcastle Emlyn. This is a small town that straddles the county boundaries of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

It is a GP surgery with 7 Doctors and a team of practice nurses. The doctors and nurses at the Surgery are often called the 'clinical team' or clinicians. They are supported in their work to deliver care by an Advanced Paramedic Practitioner (APP) and Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP), a Practice Manager and a range of reception and administrative staff. The surgery also acts as a base for community nurses, health care visitors and midwives.

It is a GP surgery which has recently become a training practice because it helps qualified doctors, known as registrars finish their training to become GPs. The surgery is also able to train medical students during their medical degree studies, before they become fully qualified doctors.

The opening times at the main surgery are 8:30am until 6.30pm Monday to Thursday and on Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm although a receptionist is available to take emergency calls until 6:30pm. The phone lines open 8.00 am.

The surgery offers pre-bookable appointments and this depends on the availability of GPs. People can book appointments through 'My Health Online' which is a system that allows appointments to be made using mobile phones or computers. The practice offers a number of daily emergency appointments in the morning and afternoon, this varies according to the number of available GPs each day.

The surgery holds a number of clinics for patients, these include flu, chronic conditions (such as diabetes and asthma), blood tests (phlebotomy services), baby checks and immunisation clinics as well as women's health clinics.

The surgery has a thriving patient participation group which is active within the surgery. The Patient Participation group is made up of patients, the Practice Manager and a GP. The group meets regularly (every 3 to 4 months) to discuss general patient topics and to act as a way of improving service delivery.



Meddygfa Emlyn

## **Introduction**

We visited Meddygfa Emlyn on 21 August 2019 to talk to patients about their experiences there. We also used a patient survey that people could fill in themselves to tell us their views. This survey was available in the surgery for patients to take away and a linked survey was also available on-line on our website.

During the last few months of 2018 and in early February 2019, two neighbouring GP practices closed down. This meant that a number of new patients had to move to Meddygfa Emlyn. When changes like this take place it can create concerns for people. People using their surgery (whether they are new or existing patients) may have to deal with new ways of doing things such as getting appointments. These changes can also be a challenge for the surgery staff when they have to explain them and deliver health care and deal with a large number of new patients.

We did not visit the surgery because we thought that there were problems or that things were going wrong. Instead, we wanted to understand what patients had to say 6 months after the changes had taken place.

## **CHC involvement at the time of change**

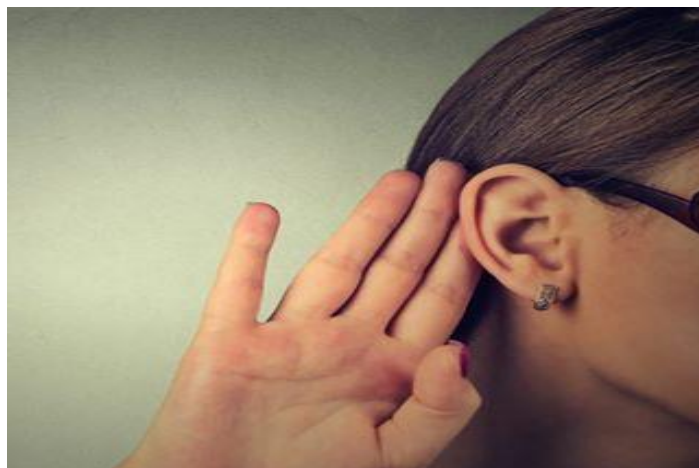
When changes in health care systems are taking place, the CHC has a right to be involved in these kinds of 'service changes'. When we knew that nearby surgeries were at risk of closing, the CHC was closely involved in the actions taken by Hywel Dda Health Board (the Health Board).

The Health Board had a duty to speak to local people and decide how GP services would be provided to people who would be affected by these closures. The CHC was part of this process.

We made sure that the Health Board spoke to people in 'engagement events' and we also went along to these to hear what concerns and themes were covered in these discussions. We wanted to make sure that the Health Board considered people's worries.

When the decision was made to relocate patients to Meddygfa Emlyn (and other local practices) we spoke to a number of people who had contacted us as they were concerned about the arrangements that had been made for them by the Health Board.

Local concerns that arose during this time were about whether Meddygfa Emlyn could deal with so many new patients. Would there be enough doctors, nurses and appointments? How would people get there if they had to travel by public transport?



## **What we did and what people told us**

We asked the GP surgery to encourage people to complete our patient survey (shown at Appendix 1) in the 2 weeks before we visited. We also talked about our visit with the practice manager.

We visited the practice on 21 August 2019 to hear directly from patients, family members and carers, speaking with people in the waiting area.

On the day of our visit, we heard from 25 people. Most people had an appointment to see a GP, but some had appointments with the health care assistant. Most of these were emergency appointments.

We wanted to chat to people to see what their experience was like. We wanted to understand how easy it was to get an appointment and what it was like to be a patient at the surgery now that more people had joined. We asked people what they thought was good and what could be better.

We also heard from the Practice Manager about the services provided at the surgery.

## **Change and upheaval**

We asked people if they had noticed any changes within the practice since the practice had taken on a significant number of other patients.

Whilst most people told us that they were aware of the changes that had taken place, the main thing that they noticed was that the surgery was busier, particularly the waiting area and reception:

**"Much busier due to closure of a surgery in Llandysul, more doctors here which is a big help"**

Another patient said:

***"Just waiting a bit longer for a routine appointment"***



A few people told us that they felt that the changes had made their patient experience better because there were now more staff available. Although they felt that the surgery was busier, appointments were still available.

### **Learning from what people told us**

- The surgery should make patients aware that a private room is available if a patient wants to speak to a member of staff in confidence.

## **Telephone system**

We often hear from people having to make a number of calls or having to wait on the telephone for a long time before getting through to anyone in their GP Surgery. We asked people their views on the phone system in Meddygfa Emlyn to see what it was like for them.

There were mixed views on the phone system especially if you rang first thing in the morning. Most people said that the phone was answered in 2-5 minutes

**“Happy with the phone system not a problem getting through”**

**“It’s harder to get through these days sometimes I get through straight away, other times I have to ring 2/3 times”**

**“Everything here is excellent”**

**“Sometimes it’s hard to get through but not all the time”**  
**“Easy to get the through on the phone”**

**“Happy with the opening times but I can only ring between 2pm and 3 pm for test results sometimes this causes a problem as I forget we can only phone within that slotted time”**

### **Learning from what people told us**

- The surgery should be aware that there are mixed views on the phone system and should try to monitor this and respond to any feedback they get from patients.
- The surgery may want to identify if test results can be available more easily for patients.

## **The appointment system**

Often, when we speak with people about their GP surgery, getting an appointment is one of their biggest concerns. We wanted to understand if Meddygfa Emlyn patients were worried about this.

We asked people about the appointment system to see if it was difficult to get a same day emergency appointment or a pre-bookable appointment. Everyone we spoke to said it was easy to get an emergency “on the day” appointment. Some people had to wait for a routine appointment with a particular doctor and these waits involved a number of weeks;

**“If it’s an emergency they always give me an appointment, it’s a longer wait for a doctor of choice it can be up to 8 weeks.”**

Other patients had similar experiences:

**“It’s a bit long for a routine appointment, can be 4 weeks, always can get an emergency appointment”**

**“Have to wait 6 weeks for a particular doctor, but always can get an emergency appointment”**

**“Can get an emergency appointment, 3 weeks if it’s non-emergency, I work until 1pm so I ask for an afternoon appointment”.**

For the most part people were:

**“Happy with the appointment system”.**

**“Appointment system pretty good”.**

We asked people if they had heard or used the “My Health on line”. Several people had heard of it but did not use it. Some people told us that they had tried it but it did not work.

### **Learning from what people told us**

- The surgery should monitor the waiting times for routine appointments to see if these times can be reduced.
- If patients have to wait too long for a routine appointment then their situation can become more urgent and this may mean that an emergency appointment then becomes needed.
- Make sure information for patients is readily available about “My Health on Line”

## **Access to the surgery**

We asked people about getting to the surgery. Everyone we spoke to said that access to the building was good. We saw for ourselves that the automatic doors made it easier for patients to get in.

We also asked about parking. There were mixed views on this:

**“Access is excellent”**

**“Very happy with the access”**

**“Happy with the parking”**

**“Parking is ok ”**

**“Parking is difficult ”**

**“It’s very hard to park here especially around 10.30 ish”**

**“Hard to find parking space, could not park here this morning had to park on the road”**

We didn’t have any comments about public transport so we do not know if this was an issue or not.

### **Learning from what people told us**

- The surgery could review the parking area to see if any extra parking spaces can be created and in particular some disabled parking bays.

We asked people what they thought about the opening times at the surgery. Most people told us they were happy with the opening times, a few people said that opening times were ok.

**“Very happy with the opening times”**

**“Openings times are excellent”**

**“Happy with the opening times”**

## **Waiting to be seen**

Generally people were content with their experience as they waited to be seen. A few people told us that it was noisy within the reception area and it did not help with the radio being on.

The waiting area was clean and tidy and the seating was good. The notice boards were busy and one in particular looked like the notices were old.

The surgery has a comments box for patients to give their feedback to the surgery. There were also notices on display about how to make a complaint.

A technology information system was displayed above reception but in some seating areas, patients could not see the screen.

A loop system was available for people with suitable hearing aids.

## **Learning from what people told us**

- The surgery should monitor noise levels in the reception area

- Notice boards need to be kept up to date and potentially the surgery's Patient Participation Group could take charge of this
- The surgery could identify whether a further information screen could be put in the reception area so more patients can see the notices

## **Patient care**

We asked people what they thought of the staff this included healthcare professionals and receptionists. The people we spoke with were very positive about the care they received from staff at all levels of the practice. The comments made were very complimentary:

**“Staff are excellent communication is very good”**

**“Staff are polite and knowledgeable”**

**“Staff are very pleasant nice to deal with”**

**“Happy with staff they talk to you and always smile”**

**“No complaints”**

**“Wonderful I think the staff are great”**

People also told us it was easy to talk to health care professionals when they have telephone consultations.

## **Summing up**

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences with us.

We are also grateful to the surgery and their staff who made us feel welcome and helped us on the day we visited their busy place of work.

The people who shared their views and experiences with us clearly appreciated the services provided in their GP surgery and valued the staff that care for them.

It is clear that Meddygfa Emlyn has faced some recent changes over which they have had little control. Some patients seemed unaffected by this change, others said that this had impacted on them negatively. Most patients (even those with some concerns) understood how and why the surgery was trying to deal with these changes.

When we visit a surgery to speak to people, we hope that our findings are representative of the all people who use the surgery. Nevertheless, we realise that this is only a snapshot of what we found on the day. If patients have more to add to our findings we always pleased to hear from them. Our contact details are included at the end of this report.

**Hywel Dda Community Health Council  
October 2019**

# Appendix 1



## GP SURGERY PATIENT INTERVIEWS

Hywel Dda Community Health Council is talking to patients to find out what it is like to access services at your surgery. We are entirely independent of your surgery and do not need your name or contact details.

<b>How happy are you with the following:</b>	<b>Very happy</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>It's ok</b>	<b>Unhappy</b>	<b>Very unhappy</b>
<b>Surgery opening times</b>					
<b>The waiting area</b>					
<b>Reception staff</b>					
<b>Access to the building</b>					
<b>Parking</b>					

**If you want to make any comments on any of the above, what are they?**

**How long have you been registered with the surgery and if you have only recently registered here, in the past 2 years, why did you change?**



**Tell us what it is like when you phone your surgery for any reason.**

**Tell us about the appointment system in the surgery**

**Tell us about the staff in the surgery – this can include doctors, nurses, receptionists or any other staff that you have seen here?**

**Have you noticed any changes in your GP surgery in the past year and if so how has this affected you? This may involve things which are good or bad from your viewpoint**

**Have you got any comments that you want to share with us about your local NHS in general eg hospitals, dentists, community care etc?**

## Appendix 2



# GP SURGERY PATIENT SURVEY

**Hywel Dda Community Health Council is using a survey to find out what it is like to access services at your surgery. We are entirely independent of your surgery and do not need your name or contact details.**

<b>How happy are you with the following:</b>	<b>Very happy</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>It's ok</b>	<b>Unhappy</b>	<b>Very unhappy</b>
<b>Surgery opening times</b>					
<b>The waiting area</b>					
<b>Reception staff</b>					
<b>Access to the building</b>					
<b>Parking</b>					

### **1. How long have you been registered with the surgery**

- Less than 3 months   
  3 - 12 months   
  1-2 years   
  2-5 years   
  5 years +

**If you have been registered less than 2 years, where were you registered before and why did you change?**

.....  
.....

**2. When you phone your surgery for any reason, how long do you have to wait before you get through to a person?**

- Less than 2 mins    2-5 mins    5-10 mins    10 mins +

**3. If you phone for an appointment, do you go through a telephone triage system before getting an appointment? (*Telephone triage is a system where someone asks you for your reason for calling before giving you an appointment or arranges for someone to call you back?*)**

- Yes    No    I'm unsure

**4. How easy is it to make a routine appointment?**

- Very easy    Easy    It's ok    Difficult    Very difficult    I don't know

**5. How long do you have to wait to see a doctor for a routine appointment?**

- Less than 48 hours    Under a week    1-2 weeks    2-3 weeks    More than 3 weeks

**6. When booking a routine appointment have you been offered an appointment with someone instead of a doctor?**

- Yes, this often happens       Yes this sometimes happens       No this has not happened       I would like to be given this option when booking

**7. When you book a routine appointment how easy is it to get an appointment on a particular day of the week/time of the day e.g. mornings/evenings?**

- Very easy       Easy       It's ok       Difficult       Very difficult       I don't know

**8. How easy is it to access an emergency/same day appointment?**

- Very easy       Easy       It's ok       Difficult       Very difficult       I don't know

**9. Have you ever failed to get an emergency/same day appointment?**

- Yes       No

**If Yes what did you do instead?**

- Tried again the next day       Went to the A&E instead       Saw a pharmacist       Other

**10. How easy is it to speak to a health care professional (doctor or nurse) by telephone?**

- Very easy       Easy       It's ok       Difficult       Very difficult       I don't know

**11. How easy is it to have a home visit if you needed one?**

- Very easy     Easy     It's ok     Difficult     Very difficult     I don't know

**12. How easy is it to order a repeat prescription?**

- Very easy     Easy     It's ok     Difficult     Very difficult     I don't know

**13. Do you have any difficulties with getting to the surgery?**

- Yes                       No

**14. Do you use My Health Online? (tick all that apply)**

- Yes, to make appointments     Yes, to order prescriptions     I don't know what this is     I've heard of it but don't use it     I don't think my surgery has it

**Have you noticed any changes in your GP surgery in the past year and if so how has this affected you? This may involve things which are good or bad from your viewpoint**

---

---

**Please tell us about your experience with any other NHS Service (e.g. Hospitals, Outpatient Clinics, Dentist etc.)**

---

---

---

## CHC Meddygfa Emlyn Practice Visit Report 2019

### Comments from the surgery

The surgery welcomed the visit from the CHC to collect views from patients following the closure of 2 neighbouring surgeries and appreciates receiving the report. The surgery is pleased that patients are understanding of the current pressures and the positive comments regarding the health care professionals and staff.

Please note comments to items highlighted in the report listed below.

The surgery should make patients aware that a private room is available if a patient wants to speak to a member of staff in confidence

A bilingual message has now been added to the patient display screen in the waiting room.

The surgery should be aware that there are mixed views on the phone system and should try to monitor this and respond to any feedback they get from patients.

The surgery is committed to fulfilling the Welsh Government 'Access to in hours GMS services standards' which include the following:

- I. Appropriate telephony and call handling systems are in place, which support the needs of callers and avoid the need for people to call back multiple times. These systems will also provide analysis data to the Practice.
- II. People receive a prompt response to their contact with a Practice via telephone (90% of calls answered within 2 minutes of the recorded message and less than 20% of calls abandoned).

The surgery is in preliminary discussions with telecoms providers to upgrade the current telephone system which will also enhance the analysis capability of incoming calls. In the meantime the surgery is conducting sample checks of incoming patient calls (checking all calls at least 1 day every 2 weeks) and can confirm that the above standards are being met.



The surgery may want to identify if test results can be available more easily for patients

The surgery is currently only provides details of test results between 2pm and 3pm every day (except when the surgery is closed for training). Patients requiring a blood test/investigation are informed by clinicians that if any action is required following receipt of the results a member of staff will contact them.

The surgery is committed to fulfilling the Welsh Government 'Access to in hours GMS services standards' which include the following:

V. People are able to use email to request a non-urgent consultation or call-back.

The surgery will consider the use of email by patients to request test result. Unfortunately this cannot be considered until Welsh Government instruct the appropriate organisations to develop national governance arrangements around the use of email.

The surgery should monitor the waiting times for routine appointments to see if these times can be reduced. If patients have to wait too long for a routine appointment then their situation can become more urgent and this may mean that an emergency appointment then becomes necessary.

The surgery is committed to fulfilling the Welsh Government 'Access to in hours GMS services standards' which include the following:

VII People receive a timely, co-ordinated and clinically appropriate response to their needs (in particular a pre-bookable appointment should be offered within 2-3 weeks but could be available up to 6 weeks in advance).

It should be noted that there may be a delay in offering a routine appointment if patients insist on seeing a particular clinician. The appointment system at the surgery is kept under regular review and this compliance with this standard will be closely monitored.

Make sure information for patients is readily available about 'My Health On Line' (MHOL)

The surgery is committed to fulfilling the Welsh Government 'Access to in hours GMS services standards' which include the following:

IV Practices have in place appropriate and accessible alternative methods of contact, including digital solutions, SMS text messaging, email and face to face (25% of all pre bookable appointments are bookable through a digital solution (eg MHOL), 100% Practice offer access to repeat prescriptions through a digital solution (eg MHOL)).

The surgery actively encourages patients to utilise MHOL and ensures that at least 25% of all pre bookable appointments are bookable via MHOL. This is monitored approximately every 2 weeks to ensure the standard is maintained. Repeat medication requests via MHOL are welcomed. Members of the Practice patient participation group (PPG) have a rota whereby a member regularly attends the surgery to talk to patients about the group and encourage uptake of MHOL, screening programmes and flu vaccinations. Staff from NWIS have also attended recent flu clinics to encourage patients to use MHOL. The surgery fully utilises My Health Text to remind patients of forthcoming appointments and highlight flu clinics etc.

The surgery could review the parking area to see if any extra parking spaces can be created and in particular some disabled parking bays

The parking facilities at Meddygfa Emlyn were reviewed in 2017. The parking area is subject to local planning regulations and a representative from Ceredigion planning department advised what would and what would not be permitted. The number of parking spaces was increased to the maximum allowed and lines marked to optimise parking. The surgery has 2 disabled parking bays close to the main surgery entrance. Unfortunately there is no possibility of further extending the parking facilities at Meddygfa Emlyn as the surgery is located in a built up area and there is no spare land adjacent to the premises.

The surgery should monitor noise levels in the reception area

Following the closure of 2 neighbouring surgeries the number of patients registered with Meddygfa Emlyn has increased by over 1000. The waiting room has, unavoidably, become busier and the radio is used to help protect the confidentiality of patients speaking to a receptionist at the main desk. Receptionists will endeavour to monitor noise levels.

Notice boards need to be kept up to date and potentially the surgery PPG could take charge of this.

The surgery will endeavour to keep notice boards up to date. Providing information on the electronic display board is being prioritised as it is easier to keep information up to date. The PPG is currently concentrating on improving uptake of screening programmes, flu clinics and MHOL however if there are any spare resources the PPG will be asked to assist with the notice boards.

The surgery could identify whether a further information screen could be put in the reception room so more patients can see the notices.

Patient display screens are expensive, however the surgery will consider a further screen as and when resources become available.

## Contact us

### **ABERYSTWYTH OFFICE**

**Welsh Government Building  
Rhodfa Padarn  
Llanbadarn Fawr  
ABERYSTWYTH  
Ceredigion  
SY23 3UR**

**01646 697610**

### **MILFORD HAVEN OFFICE**

**Suite 18 Cedar Court  
Havens Head Business  
Park  
Milford Haven  
Pembrokeshire  
SA73 3LS**

**01646 697610**

### **CARMARTHEN OFFICE**

**Suite 5, Ty Myrddin  
Old Station Road  
Carmarthen  
SA31 1BT**

**01646 697610**

**Email us at** [hywelda@waleschc.org.uk](mailto:hywelda@waleschc.org.uk)

[HDDComplaints.Advocacy@waleschc.org.uk](mailto:HDDComplaints.Advocacy@waleschc.org.uk)

**Website** [www.communityhealthcouncils.org.uk/hywelda](http://www.communityhealthcouncils.org.uk/hywelda)



@HywelDdaCHC

## **Accessible formats**

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us. You can download it from our website or order a copy by contacting our office (contact details above).