

Freedom of Information Request: Our Reference CTHB_199_18

You asked:

Up to, and including, the 10 April 2018 the stated policy of the Cwm Taf Health Board in respect of complaints about sign language interpreters not provided for GP appointments with Deaf patients, was that "Unless a GP practice is currently being managed by the Health Board, we do not routinely undertake investigations on concerns raised by patients."

I would be grateful if you could let me know the date from which this policy was first implemented.

I would be grateful if you could inform me how many complaints about failures to provide sign language interpreters for GP appointments have been made to the Cwm Taf Health Board since the introduction of this policy. Provided on a yearly basis.

I would be grateful if you could let me know how many of those complaints were not investigated by the Cwm Taf Health Board:

- a) because of that policy.
- b) because of other reasons.

Clarification on the 'policy' in question. Please see the 'policy' outlined in bold in the paragraph below.

Unless a GP practice is currently being managed by the Health Board, we do not routinely undertake investigations on concerns raised by patients. I can confirm that we do not currently manage any practices within the Aberdare area.

Our response:

The paragraph you outlined in bold refers to our standard practice and does not relate to a specific policy. Most GPs are independent contractors, either running the business on their own or in partnership with others. As with all other independent NHS contractors, GPs are responsible for running the business affairs of the practice, providing adequate premises and infrastructure to provide safe patient services and employ and train practice staff. However, some practices are managed by the Health Board and therefore all of our policies then apply to that specific GP practice.

All complaints are investigated in line with the All Wales Putting Things Right guidance which has been implemented since 1 April 2011. The guidance sets out how complaints relating to 'Independent Contractors' in the NHS, which includes GP Practices are managed. The Cwm Taf University

Health Board Concerns Policy and Procedure reflects this guidance and the process has been fully operational since 2012.

All complaints received by the Health board are triaged to ensure that an appropriate investigation is undertaken. Where the Health Board receives a complaint that relates to a GP practice, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate for the Practice or the UHB to investigate the Concerns raised. This will be determined by the seriousness of the Concerns being raised, which is assessed on a case by case basis. In the majority of cases, concerns will be passed to the GP Practice to investigate and provide a response in the first instance.

Where a complaint has already been dealt with by the GP Practice and a response issued in accordance with the regulations then the Health Board must not investigate it again. The next stage of the process would be for the individual to refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

All complaints passed to the GP practice to investigate are logged on the Health Board's Datix Risk Management System and monitored to ensure that the process is managed in a timely manner. Where a complainant contacts the GP Practice directly, the UHB would not always be informed of these complaints; this information can be obtained from the specific GP Practice concerned.

Since 2011, the Health Board has received no formal complaints relating to the failure to provide sign language interpreters for GP appointments.