Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol Cymru
Royal College of Nursing Wales

Royal College of Nursing
Ty Maeth
King George V Drive East
Cardiff
CF14 4XZ

Helen Whyley, RN, MA
Executive Director, RCN Wales

Telephone 02920 680703
Email helen.whyley@rcn.org.uk

Paul Mears
Chief Executive
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Ynysmeurig House
Unit 3, Navigation Park
Abercynon
Rhondda Cynon Taf CF45 4SB

Tuesday 28 January 2025

Dear Paul Mears,

On Thursday 16 January, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) released a harrowing report exposing the devastating impact of corridor care on patients and healthcare professionals in hospitals in Wales and across the UK.

Following this, on Tuesday 28 January, RCN Wales published a policy report setting out our recommendations for action to end corridor care in Wales. They include classifying treatment in a chair lasting over 24 hours as a Never Event, as well as a national review of NHS Wales capacity followed up by investment targeted where it is needed most.

Corridor care—the practice of treating patients in hallways, chairs, or other inappropriate settings—has become a daily reality for many frontline health care

workers. Overcrowded facilities, insufficient resources, and high patient demand have forced nurses and other staff to deliver care in environments that compromise safety, dignity, and quality.

Corridor care is happening in your health board. The testimonies below, all from

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Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol y Deyrnas Gyfunol/Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom
20 Cavendish Square
Lundain/London W1G 0RN
Ffôn/Telephone
+44 (0) 20 7409 3333
RCN Direct 0345 772 6100
rcn.org.uk

Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol Cymru Swyddfa Gogledd Cymru/ Royal College of Nursing Wales
Ty Maeth, Rhodfa Ddwyreiniol/
Brenin George V/
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CF14 4XZ

Llywydd/President
Bejoy Sebastian

Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol a Phrif Weithredwr/ General Secretary & Chief Executive
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Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol Cymru/ Executive Director of RCN Wales
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within your health board, show its impact on your nursing staff, RCN members, and patients.

> *"After experiencing a heart attack, I found myself in A&E, a place meant to be a haven of care and recovery but quickly becoming a trial of endurance. For three long days, I sat in a chair, hooked up to a heart monitor, confined to a corridor with no privacy or proper space. The lack of facilities was shocking — no access to a bed, no way to shower, and my only sustenance was a sandwich and a cup of tea, hardly the nourishment one would expect during such a critical time.*
>
> *"The environment was overwhelming. I was placed near the nurses' station, close to the toilets, where I could see patients receiving reassurance from nurses, but my own sense of vulnerability grew with each passing hour. The constant beeping of monitors, the lack of personal space, and the inability to rest properly left me feeling exposed. I overheard confidential conversations between doctors, patients, and families, adding to my discomfort — something that should never happen, but in the crowded, chaotic atmosphere, privacy was a luxury no one could afford.*
>
> *"I was scared, not just for my own health, but by what I was witnessing. The medical professionals were doing their best, but it was painfully clear they were overstretched. I saw two bodies pass by, as they were taken to the mortuary, a stark reminder of the fragility of life. The experience left me shaken, feeling helpless, vulnerable, and uncertain about what would happen next."*
>
> *An RCN member told RCN Direct [an advice service for RCN members] that the onboarding area at their hospital ward had been expanded and that there had been a reduction in the number of nursing staff working on a shift, leaving the RCN member feeling frazzled and emotional. The member pointed to the moral injury that nurses experience as a result of having to treat patients in inappropriate environments, even going as far as explaining how this moral injury "makes it difficult [for her and her colleagues] to make eye contact with patients who are being treated on a corridor". The member is now questioning whether they want to continue to be a nurse.*

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One of your health board's goals is "improving care". I am sure you agree that this is not the standard of care that your health board aims to deliver.

Nursing staff work tirelessly day and night to provide the highest standard of care for patients. But the normalisation of corridor care severely hinders their ability to do that. RCN Wales members are no longer willing to tolerate this unacceptable situation.

This issue needs urgent action at a Welsh Government level, and I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to that end. However, action must also be taken at the health board level as you have a duty, under Section 25A of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016, to take into account the importance of sensitive nursing care. No amount of skill or effort can make corridor care "sensitive". It is inherently intolerable.

Our recommendations published in today's briefing are clear, achievable actions that can improve transparency and ultimately put an end to corridor care.

Given the severity of RCN Wales's concerns, I am urgently seeking your assurance on the actions Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is taking to make sure that corridor care is eradicated. Specifically, I would welcome details on the following:

- Staffing level increases where areas are above the planned capacity.
- Compliance with the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 25A and 25B duties.
- Activity on the Welsh Government's 50-Day Challenge and whole-system care pathways.

Please provide me with details of all your actions as a matter of urgency.

The lives and safety of patients are at risk.

Continued.....

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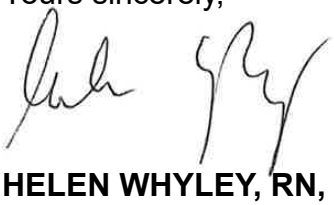
If you would like to meet with me to discuss this letter, please contact my office as detailed above.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



HELEN WHYLEY, RN, MA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RCN WALES

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