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# Health Update

from Russell George

Welsh Conservative Assembly Candidate for Montgomeryshire

Dear resident,

Over the last five years as your Assembly Member, the delivery of the best possible health services for the people of Mid Wales has been a priority for me. Judging by the overwhelming response to my recent residents' health survey, healthcare is also an issue which is especially important to the residents of Montgomeryshire.

Over 3000 people completed the survey which has provided me with a comprehensive insight into the issues that are important to the people of Montgomeryshire. As a result, I have been able to share these results with healthcare professionals and decision makers.

## Local Access to Services

There is deep frustration that access to healthcare is moving further away from our local communities as services are centralised in more densely populated areas, meaning that we have to travel longer distances to obtain quality health provision.

In my view, we need to strengthen our local community hospitals in Llanidloes, Newtown, Welshpool and Machynlleth. I firmly believe our existing hospitals can and should be upgraded. I have been able to use the survey results to promote a proposal for a Community Hospital Development Fund and I am pleased that this suggestion has been adopted by my Party so that we can upgrade our existing hospitals. I believe in the common-sense approach that NHS services should be delivered as close as possible to home and the Welsh Conservative commitment to allocating £12 million to minor injury units and £20 million to a Community Hospital Development Fund to encourage the innovative use of community hospitals across Wales is to be welcomed.

We also need to retain more specialised services at Shrewsbury, Bronglais and Wrexham Maelor hospitals. I'm therefore pleased that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has confirmed it will maintain consultant-led maternity services at Wrexham Maelor Hospital. This is a victory for common sense; the Health Board has finally listened to the concerns of campaigners, clinicians and the public who opposed these plans. The uncertainty surrounding the future of these services has been extremely unsettling for staff, mums-to-be and their families and I'm pleased this matter has now been resolved. Retaining consultant-led maternity services at Wrexham Maelor Hospital is much welcome news for us in Mid Wales.

We, in Mid Wales, also depend heavily on services provided by the Royal Shrewsbury hospital and the Telford Princess Royal hospital. There is currently an ongoing process of evaluating services at both of these hospitals and we, as Montgomeryshire residents, will clearly want services to be retained and strengthened in Shrewsbury. The programme of consultation, which has been named '*NHS Future Fit*' is due to reach conclusions on changing the current model of healthcare which serves Shropshire and Mid Wales by Spring 2017. I will be campaigning to ensure that we receive the best possible outcome for residents in Montgomeryshire.

### **NEPT – Non Emergency Patient Transport**

A number of residents have contacted me regarding NEPT. If you have problems and difficulties making your own arrangements to attend your out-patient appointments at hospitals, please call 01686 613200 to see whether you are able to access the facility.

### **Waiting Times**

With regards to waiting times, I strongly believe it is wrong that Welsh patients have to wait longer for elective surgical operations than residents just over the border in England. Whereas the maximum waiting time in England is 18 weeks, in Wales, 95% of patients must be seen within 26 weeks with the remainder being seen within 36 weeks.

I believe patients ought to receive treatment based on clinical need regardless of their country of residence but as a result of the different policy priorities of the previous Welsh Labour Government and the UK Government, Welsh and English patients are not treated on an equal basis.

Although there are policy differences, I always aim to support people on an individual basis, and during my time as an Assembly Member, I often made representations on behalf of constituents. If re-elected, I would be happy to meet with any individual constituents and provide support.

### **Cancer Treatment**

I also believe that much-needed investment is required in tackling the scourge of cancer which blights so many families and I would like to see a Cancer Patients' Fund which would widen access to modern, life-extending cancer medication and develop a network of mobile cancer treatment units so that cancer patients who currently face long round-trips for treatment can access this closer to home.

Clinicians should decide whether a patient should have access to a particular medicine which could save or extend their life and I believe it is woeful that some patients in Montgomeryshire are being recommended courses of treatment by their oncologists, but then denied them, because access to cancer medicines, which are readily available in other parts of the UK, are not available in Wales.

### **GP Appointments**

My survey results indicated that patients are generally pleased with their local GP practice, but there is specific concern with how long patients have to wait to receive an appointment. For my part, it's important that we pay tribute to our local GPs, nurses and healthcare professionals; they do an outstanding job in often difficult circumstances.

One of the most pressing issues is GP recruitment. This is rapidly becoming a crisis for the NHS across the United Kingdom, placing our general practitioners under severe strain. The issue in rural Mid Wales is even greater.

I regularly meet with GPs, Powys Teaching Health Board and other health professionals and have

previously discussed the issue of GP recruitment in Mid Wales. There are currently five surgeries in Montgomeryshire attempting to recruit GPs. As a result of the retirement of a number of GPs, several practices are having to make changes to ensure a high level of clinical care is not compromised.

### Care Services & Mental Health

Finally, I would like to refer to the way in which we improve services for our ageing population. Older people are wrongly seen by some as a burden on society and this must change. Living longer is something we should celebrate and we must recognise the immense contribution which older people across Wales make to their families, our communities and society. I believe we need to ensure that our care services are equipped to provide people with the support they need in later life and we must also ensure that people's life savings are not decimated by exorbitant care costs.

Mental health and dementia in particular is also an issue which is in desperate need for attention. A National Dementia Plan for Wales would improve diagnosis rates, improve dementia awareness and look at developing new treatments and the search for a cure. I hope that the next Welsh Government will work to make Wales a world leader and the first Dementia Friendly Nation in the World.

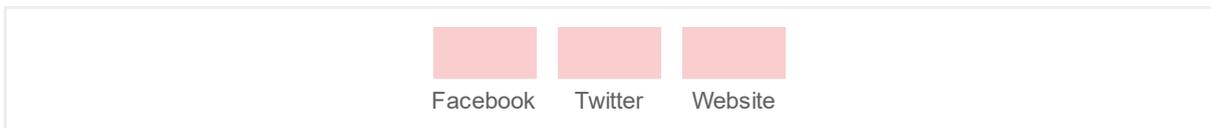
I hope that this update has been informative and helpful but if there is anything you would like to raise with me or if you require help or support on any issue, please do not hesitate to contact me at [campaign@russellgeorge.com](mailto:campaign@russellgeorge.com) or on 01686 610887.

Best regards,



Russell George

Welsh Conservative Assembly Candidate for Montgomeryshire



*Promoted by Richard George on behalf of Russell George, both at 20 High Street, Welshpool, SY21 7JP*

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