



## **BGM Chair Report May 2018 – March 2019**

I stepped up from being vice-chair following the step down of Keith Silvester in May 2018, and by June it became apparent that my tenure as chair would be short lived! The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, announced that from 1st April 2019, the responsibility for providing healthcare services for people in the **Bridgend** County Borough Council area would transfer from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board to **Cwm** Taf University Health Board. As I work in the Bridgend area, I would be moving to Bro Taf LDC in April 2019. As chair, I unfortunately didn't manage to attend any LDC/LHB liaison meetings as they clashed with other commitments but I was fortunate that Rhian Paul and Roger Pratley were able to attend on my behalf.

The decision to change the LHB's threw everything up in the air. LHB staff didn't know what was going to happen, if they would still have jobs, practices didn't know what was going to happen regarding their referral pathways and a multitude of other factors. As the year progressed, we were reassured that nothing would change except for our contracts being managed by Cwm Taf LHB. The direction of patient referrals would continue as before, and on the ground, we would see no difference. To date, the transition does seem to have been fairly smooth.

The other major challenge that we faced as an LDC was surrounding the move of HIW from personal registration for private dentistry to practice registration. It became apparent that HIW repeatedly seemed to misplace sensitive practice and personal data. What was more disconcerting was that although practitioners felt able to inform the LDC in meetings, no-one wanted to have their name given as an example to HIW to evidence examples of the data loss. As an LDC we decided to challenge HIW on behalf of our members. Our complaint eventually escalated and we ended up reporting HIW to the ICO.

ABMU was a forerunner for the new e-referral system, it is a positive step forward for the referral system, although there have been a few teething issues on the whole it seems to have been a fairly smooth rollout, although there are still some ongoing issues particularly regarding the need to provide photographs of soft tissue lesions and the lack of camera facilities in many practices.

The 'new' dental contract that we had been promised for years to replace the 'flawed 2006 dental contract' never materialized. Instead the new Chief Dental Officer Collette Bridgeman decided to work within the current contract legislation and contract reform was born. Stage 1 of contract reform has had a minor impact on 20% of dental practices. It is primarily a form filling exercise with a large emphasis on prevention and fluoride application. It will be interesting to see what stage 2 of contract reform will bring. The Welsh Assembly document 'A fresh start. Inquiry into dentistry in Wales' has provided some key recommendations that I hope will be taken up and improve the situation and moral of dentists in Wales.

I find it a very sad situation that we find that dentists and contract holders often feel unable to openly challenge the LHB's, HIW, GDC for fear of reprisals. This makes the role of the LDC all the more important to expose unfair practices, shine a light on issues that arise and challenge the authorities that govern us on behalf of all dentists.

As an optimist, I am feeling more positive about the future of NHS dentistry. The lack of a new contract is disappointing, but as it had been promised and delayed for so many years in some respect the clarity that it isn't going to change anytime soon at least stops the false hope and disappointment that I had been feeling for many years. Contract reform is not the new contract that I had hoped for, but it is the start of a change and gives hope that further changes can happen. The new LHB's – Swansea Bay and Cwm Taf Morgannwg have started to find their feet, and I am sure we will face challenges in the years to come as these two new LHB's start to find their feet.

I'd like to thank Rhian and Roger for their help during my short tenure as Chair of Morgannwg LDC and I wish the new Chair the best of luck in her new role.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be the chair of your LDC and best wishes to all.

Anwen Hopkins