



Welsh NHS Confederation
Confederasiwn GIG Cymru

Briefing

Transforming NHS services to improve patient experience

This briefing highlights examples of innovative practice which have taken place in recent months across NHS Wales to help respond to demand, support the population and plan for the future.

January 2022

Introduction

The health and social care system continues to face a significant amount of pressure, with multiple factors contributing to a perfect storm of unbalanced 'demand and supply'. Among other factors, the Omicron wave has only exacerbated the impact of winter pressures on capacity to deliver services across the system, from primary care to A&Es.

Difficult times lie ahead, as the NHS in Wales seeks to absorb the pressure of the Omicron wave amid the current huge demand and the challenge of significant staff absences. To help overcome these challenges, NHS organisations continue to work in partnership to develop initiatives which aim to enable long-term transformation.

Tackling long waiting times and improving patient experience are key priorities for NHS organisations and this briefing outlines a few of the current projects which aim to secure improvements in both these areas. For example, a new Surgical Same Day Emergency Care unit has opened in Wrexham Maelor Hospital which aims to reduce the number of GP patient referrals coming into the Emergency Department. This will offer patients timely assessment and reduce hospital admissions.

Other initiatives from across Wales are also focusing on reducing the length of patient stays in hospital, with Swansea Bay University Health Board putting in place a new outpatient service for those with neurological conditions who may have harmful antibodies in their blood. Usually performed as an inpatient procedure, the new service allows patients to return home between the multiple sessions required.

Health boards are providing people with the information they require to support their health and wellbeing at home, potentially avoiding future admissions. In collaboration with young people, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board developed a new website which focuses on young people's mental health.

Partnership working continues to be a focus for NHS organisations across Wales and these efforts have been recognised, with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board paediatric physio team having won the National MOVE Programme's Better Together Award for its work with a local primary school.

The system continues to face unprecedented challenges, with additional complexities that Covid has introduced. This briefing illustrates some of the actions being taken across the service to rise to these challenges and put patient experience at the heart of everything it does.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

‘Transport to Health’ community shuttle bus launches in Gwent

- Pilot offers support to attend appointments or visit patients
- Service offers the community direct access to hospital

The Parish Trust has launched a new Transport To Health shuttle bus, which was funded by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board’s (ABUHB) Transport to Health Community Transport Fund. Anybody needing direct access to hospital and those accompanying them can use this service for attending appointments or visiting loved ones at The Royal Gwent or Grange University Hospitals. The bus will be running twice a week, picking up from stops in Caerphilly, Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen.

This six-month pilot project is a part of the wider Transport to Health partnership project set up to support community transport across the ABUHB area. The project is inviting grant applications for up to £10,000 from groups or organisations who want to grow or develop not-for-profit transport initiatives to help people in their community get to health appointments or to visit loved ones in hospital. The funding can be used to enhance existing transport services, develop new schemes or encourage new partnerships.

So far, six projects have received funding in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Powys. They are working to provide different community transport solutions, ranging from accessible transport for the disabled and elderly, to volunteer car schemes for anyone with a barrier to using public transport.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital opens new Surgical Same Day Emergency Care unit to help improve patient treatment time

- Service aims to reduce hospital admissions and improve patient experience
- Helps avoid unplanned and longer than necessary stays in hospitals

A new Surgical Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) unit has opened at Wrexham Maelor Hospital for patients to gain quicker and easier access for surgical conditions. The SDEC is for adult surgical patients who are referred from their GP, the Urgent Primary Care Centre, or who have been seen and reviewed in the Emergency Department (ED).

The consultant-led service will rapidly assess, diagnose and treat eligible patients before discharging them home to recover without being admitted, and if clinically safe, patients could go home the same day they receive care. Most patients who are referred do not require surgery and after diagnostic tests and assessments could be managed at home rather than as an inpatient in the hospital. The unit will ensure the ED space is used for patients that need emergency care and surgical patients are in the correct setting.

Benefits associated with treating people through the Surgical SDEC services include improving patient experience through timely assessment and diagnosis and reducing hospital admissions. The service will help avoid unplanned and longer than necessary stays in hospitals, resulting in lower risk of infections and de-conditioning for patients.



Supporting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing

- New website created in collaboration with young people
- Content will continue to evolve, including guidance for parents and carers

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has developed a new website, co-produced with children and young people, to offer useful information and resources on emotional wellbeing and mental health. All of the information on the website has been specially curated by healthcare professionals in partnership with young people.

The wellbeing of some children and young people has been significantly impacted by the pandemic and it remains vital that they access support. The information on the emotional wellbeing and mental health website can help children and young people understand some of their thoughts and feelings, as well as signposting relevant support. Visitors can find information about emotional wellbeing, mental health, services available and how to access them. There is also lots of advice and a range of useful resources signposted.

The content will continue to evolve and develop, including guidance for parents and carers, sharing ways they can support children and young people during difficult times.

Paediatric physio teams celebrate award in collaboration with primary school

- MOVE programme supports independent movement in disabled young people
- Award recognised successful partnership between paediatric physio team and Ysgol Ty Coch

A joint collaboration between staff in Cwm Taf Morgannwg's paediatric physio team and the staff and pupils in Ysgol Ty Coch, Tonteg, has won the National MOVE Programme's Better Together Award. The award celebrates fantastic partnerships to achieve the best outcomes for pupils and acknowledges the outstanding achievement between the staff, pupils and the physio team.

The National MOVE Programme enables disabled young people to gain independent movement through an activity-based programme. It combines an approach of education, therapy and family knowledge to teach the skills of sitting, standing and walking. There are five MOVE schools across the health board, all of which are supported by the paediatric physio team.



Digital Health and Care Wales

New Emergency Department system goes live

- New digital system gives healthcare professionals real-time patient information
- System to be rolled out to other parts of Wales over the next year

Neath Port Talbot Minor Injuries Unit is the first in Wales to use a new national Emergency Department system. The digital system will replace paper records and provide an electronic tracking grid to give healthcare professionals real-time information on a patient's treatment.

The minor injuries unit previously used paper-based casualty cards to record patients' care, but the new system creates digital records which can be shared safely and quickly with other departments and healthcare professionals.

Following the successful launch of the system in Neath Port Talbot, it will be installed in Morriston Hospital in Swansea early in 2022, and rolled out to other parts of Wales during next year.

Health Education and Improvement Wales

Mental health inpatient programme adapts to suit those who need it most

- Programme helps to determine appropriate nurse staffing levels within mental health inpatient wards
- Allows better stakeholder engagement and co-production with mental health nurses

Over the last few months, the mental health inpatient programme scope has been reviewed and refined. The mental health workstream consists of senior representatives from each health board across Wales and follows an evidence-based approach to create robust methods, tools and techniques that will be used to determine appropriate nurse staffing levels within mental health inpatient wards.

To refine the programme, it was essential to categorise inpatient wards that held similar functions. A scoping exercise was undertaken and resulted in the work stream defining the inclusion criteria of “admission and treatment wards”.

The decision to refine the scope of the programme has not been taken lightly. However, the work undertaken within the admission and treatment areas will have wider application to other mental health facilities. Furthermore, this process enables the programme to better engage with stakeholders and to ensure co-production with mental health nurses across Wales, making these services work as a single system.

Hywel Dda University Health Board

New affiliation to deliver research and innovation opportunities

- Memorandum of Understanding enables innovative solutions to wound care
- Technology research strengthens health of Welsh patients

Initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Wales are in progress thanks to a new collaboration between Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB) and The Welsh Wound Innovation Centre (WWIC). A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the organisations, which will see innovative solutions being developed to promote opportunities across wound care technology research, further strengthening the health of patients in Wales.

There are 2.2 million people across the UK with chronic wounds, the management of which is estimated to cost the NHS £5.3bn per year. 87 per cent of patients are cared for in the community by district nurses, supported by a unique network of over 748 specialist tissue viability nurses.

The health board's role will be delivered by the Tritech Institute, which has been established by HDUHB to provide specific services in innovative healthcare solutions.

WWIC is the first national wound healing centre worldwide and is the flagship facility for clinical innovation in Wales.



Powys Teaching Health Board

More Powys Health and Care Academy students take up work placements

- More recruits support hospital services in Powys
- Health and Care Academy supports those at risk of long-term unemployment

A second wave of recruits to the new Powys Health and Care Academy (HCA) have begun their work placements, supporting hospital services in Llandrindod Wells, Ystradgynlais, Newtown and Brecon. Through the HCA, the Kickstart Scheme is supporting employers to create jobs for 16 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit, who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

The health and social care placements will consist of 25 hours a week for the next six months, with recruits undertaking a programme of learning which will equip them with skills and knowledge related to the health and social care sector.

Powys HCA will be offering face-to-face and digital learning opportunities through four schools – a School of Research, Development and Innovation, a School of Leadership, a School of Volunteers and Carers, and a School of Professional and Clinical Education and Training – to employees in the health and care sector, to those looking for a career in the sector and to volunteers and unpaid carers who support the sector.



Public Health Wales NHS Trust

Tackling inequality could save hospitals in Wales £322 million every year

- Report evidences importance of preventative action
- Cost of health service provision higher for those living in more deprived communities

Inequality in hospital service use is costing the NHS in Wales the equivalent of a brand new NHS hospital, or the yearly salaries of nearly 10,000 extra nurses every year, according to a new report from Public Health Wales.

The report looked at different hospital services, finding that preventative action which improves the health equity between advantaged and disadvantaged communities and their timely access to health services could help reduce a £322m healthcare gap, especially in emergency admissions and A&E attendance.

The report found that the average annual cost of health service provision was generally higher for those living in our more deprived communities. Costs were highest amongst working aged adults in all hospital service categories, except for elective inpatient admissions.

The reasons for these gaps are complex and will be explored in further studies to expand understanding of how population differences and deprivation influence health service use in Wales. This is particularly relevant during the pandemic response and future recovery of the NHS and the wider economy in Wales.

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Outpatient service establishes new treatment for neurological conditions

- Morriston Hospital first centre in Wales to offer new treatment
- Service halves the time patients need to spend in hospital

A new outpatient service for people with neurological conditions will more than halve the time they need to spend in hospital. It will help patients with neurological conditions who may have harmful antibodies within their blood that are attacking their body. Swansea's Morriston Hospital is the first centre in Wales, and only the second in the UK, to offer the service.

Peripheral plasma exchange involves patients with conditions such as multiple sclerosis or myasthenia gravis (which causes muscle weakness) having their blood filtered through a machine over a two-to-three-hour period, across three consecutive days. By taking away the unhealthy plasma, the antibodies are removed and the patient's symptoms may improve.

Until now, plasma exchange has been performed as an inpatient procedure in the renal unit at Morriston Hospital and involved a stay of up to two weeks. Instead, a new Spectra Optia Apheresis machine allows the exchange to be carried out through two venous cannulas in the patient's arms. Patients receiving the treatment are able to go home between each of their three sessions. It is hoped in the future another machine can be introduced at Morriston Hospital which could be used to treat more inpatients.



First peripheral blood stem cell collection completed in Velindre Cancer Centre

- Blood stem cell collection produces twice the number of cells
- Donor reports a positive experience

8th November 2021 marked the first peripheral blood stem cell collection performed by the Welsh Bone Marrow Donor Registry (WBMDR) at the brand-new collection centre within Velindre Cancer Centre (VCC). The collection was a great success, with twice the number of cells requested by the transplant centre being collected and the donor shared that she had a positive experience throughout.

A peripheral blood stem cell collection via apheresis is a non-surgical procedure where the stem cells are collected from the blood stream using an apheresis machine, following a series of stimulating injections. Around 85 per cent of volunteer donors who come up as a match for a patient in need of a transplant will donate in this way. Patients with blood cancers such as leukaemia and lymphomas may require a stem cell transplant, as well as people with inherited metabolic diseases.

Reaching this significant milestone has been an exceptional team effort from the WBMDR and the VCC staff. Both teams worked seamlessly and tirelessly to deliver this vital service in support of Welsh and global stem cell transplant patients.

Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

New technology to better support victims of domestic violence

- Ambulance crews support patients to access help via an app
- Digital referrals allow vulnerable people to get support quicker

The Welsh Ambulance Service has introduced new technology to better support victims of domestic violence. Ambulance crews have been supporting patients to access Live Fear Free for help and advice on domestic violence since its creation using a bespoke telephone number.

Crews now have the ability to assist patients via an app on their trust-issued iPad to speed up and streamline the process. The technology to refer patients digitally using iPads is not only more efficient for crews, but it means that vulnerable patients get the support they need more quickly.

Live Fear Free is a 24/7 helpline for women, children and men experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence or other forms of violence against women. It is a main point of contact in Wales to access support, information, safety-planning, advocacy, refuge and counselling services.

The poster features a purple background with a white illustration of a town at night. A yellow banner in the top right corner reads 'Help is still available 24/7'. The text on the poster includes: 'Llinell Gymorth Live Fear Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline 0808 80 10 800 ffon • tect • sgwrsio byw • eboist call • text • live chat • email'. Below this, it says 'Chat to us confidentially' and lists contact options: 'TEXT 07860 077333', 'LIVE CHAT gov.wales/livefearfree', 'info@livefearfreehelpline.wales', and '0808 80 10 800'. Three thought bubbles above the houses contain the terms 'domestic abuse', 'sexual violence', and 'coercive control'. At the bottom, the slogan 'Home shouldn't be a place of fear' is written in a cursive font, with the hashtag '#LiveFearFree' and the Welsh Government logo below it.

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body representing all the organisations making up the NHS in Wales. We represent the seven local Health Boards, three NHS trusts, Health Education and Improvement Wales and Digital Health and Care Wales. We are part of the NHS Confederation and host NHS Wales Employers. We support our members by acting as a driving force for positive change through strong representation, facilitating system leadership and our proactive policy, influencing, communications, events and engagement work.

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