

Leisure and Culture Trusts Health and Wellbeing Support to the NHS in Wales



In partnership with



Welsh NHS Confederation
Confederasiwn GIG Cymru

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Foreword

Community Leisure UK (Wales) represents not-for-profit charitable Trusts, which are registered charities, societies or community interest companies (with a public benefit asset lock) managing and providing public leisure, sport, arts and/or culture services in partnership with their Local Authority for communities across Wales.

While they are independent, leisure and culture trusts work in close partnership with their local authority, managing and delivering public leisure and culture services on their behalf. Their charitable trust business model ensures both activities and people have (subsidised) access to a wide range of cultural and physical activity programming, and takes a person-centred approach considering personal preferences, needs and ability to engage. They reinvest their profit and resources back into local communities.

Community Leisure UK (Wales) and their members are delighted to be working with the Welsh NHS Confederation to learn about and understand the health sector, and to raise awareness of how our members make a significant contribution to the health sector's work. This report is filled with case studies of work that is already happening across Wales, supporting the NHS on some of their most urgent priorities, including recovery of the pandemic, mental health and wellbeing, integrating care into communities, reducing social isolation, and support for children and young people.

Steve Ward

COMMUNITY LEISURE UK BOARD MEMBER
REPRESENTING WALES &
CEO, NEWPORT LIVE

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the national membership body representing the leaders of the organisations making up the NHS in Wales: the seven local health boards, three NHS trusts, Health Education and Improvement Wales and Digital Health and Care Wales. Our aim is for an empowered, healthy population supported by sustainable, world class health and care services.

With pressures on the health and care system exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, now is the time for the NHS to work with a range of partners to support the population's health and wellbeing.

During the pandemic, leisure and community trusts played a crucial role in local health delivery, from transforming leisure facilities into temporary field hospitals, to supporting mass testing and the vaccination programme. In addition, community and leisure trusts support population health by helping prevent ill health, addressing health inequalities and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

On behalf of our members, we look forward to continuing to work with Community Leisure UK (Wales) to raise awareness of good practice and the impact that leisure and culture has on people in Wales.

Nesta Lloyd-Jones

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
WELSH NHS CONFEDERATION

Leisure and Culture Trusts' Health and Wellbeing Offer

We encourage you to:



CONNECT

with your local leisure and culture providers to understand their work.



VISIT

your local leisure and culture venues and programmes to see the impact they have on local communities and peoples' health and wellbeing.



COLLABORATE

with your local leisure and culture providers to implement a plan for leisure and culture to support health and wellbeing.



Collectively welcoming over **16.6 MILLION VISITORS A YEAR****

Providing a community-based approach by integrating care into communities.



115 COMMUNITY ASSETS

Offering reliable infrastructure across Wales. Providing a welcoming place to keep people well nearer to home.



Combined workforce of **OVER 3000 STAFF**

Specialised in amongst other exercise referral, mental health and wellbeing, social care, rehabilitation and recovery, coaching healthy lifestyles, weight management, and ill health management and prevention.



Person-centred approach

considering personal preferences, needs and ability to engage.



Programmes and activities aim to:

- **reduce inequalities in ill health** by providing access to tailored and supervised physical activity and cultural activity that improves people's physical and mental health.
- **reduce the time patients spend in hospitals & in NHS care** through prehabilitation, rehabilitation, and preventative services.



Offering the NHS and wider public health partners their **facilities, skilled workforce, & reach into communities** to jointly improve Wales' health and wellbeing.

* Leisure and culture trusts are registered charities, societies or community interest companies (with a public benefit asset lock) managing and providing public leisure, sport, arts and/or culture services in partnership with their Local Authority for communities across Wales. In Wales, 50% of public leisure provision, and much of the public culture provision, is delivered locally by leisure and culture trusts.

** Pre-Covid visitor statistics.

Introduction

Wales is in the unique position that half of its public leisure provision, and much of its public culture provision, is provided by charitable organisations known as leisure and culture trusts. These organisations are fully dedicated to providing an accessible and inclusive leisure- and culture offer to their local communities, in line with addressing the NHS' most pressing challenges, including the prevention of ill health, addressing health inequalities, and encouraging lifelong wellbeing.

Leisure and culture trusts influence both the medical and social determinants of health. According to data from 4Global through DataHub, leisure trusts' work creates £101 of social value per person using their facilities and services¹. This social value is measured through savings to the NHS, reduced crime levels, and improved mental and physical health of communities.

These organisations are a key partner for local government and the NHS as their business model is built on the trust model, meaning that they reinvest their profits into the organisation to ensure those communities who are in most need of inclusive activities and services, can access them. Trusts:

- cross-subsidise services i.e. more profitable activities will fund other health and community outreach work, and;
- cross-subsidise access i.e. income from those who can afford to pay is used to support reduced cost or free activities for those with less disposable income.

Managing 115 physical buildings in communities across nearly every region in Wales, welcoming over 16.6 million visitors a year², and having a combined workforce of over 3000 people, leisure and culture trusts are ready to support the Welsh health sector. They also deliver many services in community settings, including schools, parks, and nursing and care homes, supporting the NHS' community-centred approach.

Leisure and culture trusts offer the NHS and wider public health partners their facilities, skilled workforce, and reach into communities to jointly improve Wales's health and wellbeing.

We encourage you, therefore, to:



Connect

Connect with your local leisure and culture providers to understand their work;



Visit

Visit your local leisure and culture venues and programmes to see the impact they have on local communities and peoples' health and wellbeing;



Collaborate

Collaborate with your local leisure and culture providers to implement a plan for leisure and culture to support health and wellbeing.

Helping prevent ill health
Addressing health inequalities
Encouraging healthier lifestyles

¹ Based on a sample of 26 sites who provide data through DataHub.

² Pre-Covid visitor statistics.

Trusts' Role During the Covid-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, leisure and culture trusts played a vital role in the local Covid-19 response. Through their agile response, they demonstrated that they have the right infrastructure, workforce, experience of targeted activities and interventions, and reach into their local communities to support the NHS.

They offered their facilities as field hospitals, rehabilitation, testing- and vaccination centres, and transferred their staff to support the delivery of health services in those transformed facilities. They also developed and delivered activities to keep people connected and reduce their isolation, and facilitated the launch of a new service to help people recover from Covid.

CASE STUDY

POST COVID REHABILITATION SERVICE NEWPORT

Newport Live in collaboration with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Overview

During March–July 2020, in the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) reported 2,761 patients diagnosed with Covid-19.

On discharge from acute care most patients who suffer severe Covid-19 pneumonitis showed persisting signs of fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle mass loss and deconditioning. Resulting in decreased exercise tolerance, reduced mobility and reduced functionality. Many had ongoing psychological and complex health concerns.

A bespoke face-to-face Covid-19 Multi-disciplinary Team rehabilitation programme was set up to maximise recovery.

Actions taken

- All patients discharged from ABUHB critical care areas with Dx Covid-19 were identified
- Patients were invited to attend a Face to Face MDT appointment to assess suitability for rehabilitation
- If patients were identified as needing specialist intervention they were referred to appropriate services
- If patients were deemed suitable and consented a FTF pre-assessment appointment was offered
- Multi-professional outcome measures were established and measured
- 6 sessions of FTF rehabilitation commenced including an individualised prescribed exercise programme
- Full MDT support throughout the programme
- Post rehabilitation assessment was completed after 6 sessions and outcome measures recorded



Newport Live supported ABUHB through gaining Welsh Government permission to allow their facilities to reopen when the leisure sector was under enforced closure to deliver facility and wellbeing operations of gym and exercise.

In addition, the multi-disciplinary team with support from Newport Live also delivered Virtual Pulmonary Rehabilitation during the lockdown as they recognised that this patient group were within the extremely vulnerable classification regarding Covid. This was a joint exercise program in a virtual setting, and the programme is still running.

Following from the Post Covid Rehabilitation program, the team then delivered a Post ITU Rehabilitation program. The multi disciplinary team focused on patient cohorts that had been recently discharged from ITU with the aim of improving functional ability.

They have now launched the Neuro Fit program, which is a multi-disciplinary delivery in which Newport Live have combined their Stroke pathway with the lead Physiotherapist from the Community Neuro Physiotherapy Department. This is a first of its kind program that incorporates all aspects of Neuro Rehabilitation within a community leisure setting.

2022 will also see the introduction of Physio led rehabilitation within Newport Live where an ABUHB Physiotherapist will deliver rehab programs to individual patients within Newport Live gyms. Once rehab is completed these patients will then be offered ongoing Newport Live membership or direct referral into Newport NERS.

Outcomes

The primary measurable benefits of Covid Rehabilitation are a decrease in symptoms (mainly dyspnoea and fatigue) and an increase in exercise endurance.

These were measured by the Modified Borg Dyspnoea Scale, MRC Breathlessness Scale, six-minute walk test, sit to stand, modified fatigue impact scale and a handgrip test. Mental wellbeing was measured using the Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale.

Participants were asked to rate their improvement in function at the end of the six-week program compared to the start of the programme using a visual analogue scale (VAS). Reported perceived improvement ranged from 50% to 100% with an average of 84%.

The multi-disciplinary team has created a blueprint for health boards/NERS/Leisure Services on the set up and delivery of a Covid Rehabilitation program. The service has been presented to the British Thoracic Society upon request of the Covid Rehab teams patient outcome measures, and to the British Medical Journal as the service were nominated finalists under the 2021 Respiratory Team of the Year.

The team also won the South Wales Argus Health and Social Care 2020 Team of the year. Newport Live – the leisure trust – won the Contribution to the Community Award in the Newport Business awards for the programme and the support delivered in 2021.

Results and benefits

“ From feeling so ill to now feeling so much better, both stronger and mentally. Amazing can't thank you enough.

PATIENT

“ We have seen quantifiable evidence that multi-disciplinary team working, when delivered within a community Leisure setting delivers significantly improved outcome measures among patient cohorts.

CHRIS PENNINGTON, NATIONAL EXERCISE REFERRAL CO-ORDINATOR FOR NEWPORT

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Facilities, Infrastructure & Community Assets

Trusts manage a wide range of community assets, but most commonly these include leisure facilities (leisure centres, sports halls, swimming pools, outdoor courts), green spaces (parks and playgrounds), and cultural facilities (town- and community halls, cinemas, theatres, museums, libraries).

Those facilities are not solely used to deliver and manage a traditional leisure- and culture offer such as exercise classes or book lending services, but wider health services are co-located at the spaces they manage, including GPs, employment support services, and adult community learning.

Trusts' assets are located across communities, both urban and rural, providing reliable infrastructure across Wales. This also means that their facilities and green spaces are made accessible as a welcoming place that provides active support to keep people well and maintain independent living.

Their facilities have spaces available in the daytime to move NHS services into the buildings and integrate people into the centres as both patients and users. Bringing patients into leisure and culture facilities creates a joint-up approach between NHS services and physical activity and cultural activities that lead to better health. This way, health, wellbeing, and leisure can happen in one place nearer to home and away from hospitals and clinical settings.

CASE STUDY

ESCAPE PAIN CARDIFF

GLL with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Overview

The Escape pain programme based at Eastern Leisure centre is currently on its second cohort and is becoming increasingly popular. The Centre is managed by leisure trust GLL but the programme is currently run twice per week by NHS professionals from the Physio team and runs for 6 weeks.

Actions taken

- 6-week physiotherapy run in local leisure centres as part of the NHS Escape Pain Programme, closer to patients' homes within a community setting rather than a medical setting.
- Discounted membership offer to patients completing the course to continue their health and wellbeing journey.
- Development of exit routes and new co-delivered programmes to support health and wellbeing and provide long-term activity options.
- New low impact circuits classes have been added to the programme to cater for clients on completion of Escape programmes.
- 3 more staff from Eastern Leisure Centre are booked on Exercise Referral course starting March 2022 to help support the programme.
- 2 members of staff at Western Leisure Centre are now also trained in Escape Pain to help support the programme in the west of the city.

Outcomes

Four members of Staff from Eastern Leisure Centre have been offered training in Escape Pain Knee/Hips and Escape Pain Backs alongside NHS professionals with the intention of co-delivering the programme. This has also provided an insight into the needs of these specialist populations regarding exit routes. The centre fitness class programme is being adapted to cater for these clients by introducing additional "Basics" low impact classes at suitable times to provide these exit routes.

Throughout the programme centre staff have opportunities to engage with participants and promote the new NHS membership offering to them, which in turn encourages them to use the centre independently making healthy lifestyle changes more sustainable. This membership scheme was specifically introduced to support these groups into regular physical activity.

Making healthy lifestyle changes more sustainable

Results and benefits

“ The joint work with Better health has enabled us in Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board to run high value interventions closer to patient’s homes. Running structured groups focused on behavioural change in the local community helps us to de-medicalise some conditions and improves patient long term health outcomes. Supporting NHS service users in the community to make positive changes to their health and well-being and the offer of long term activity options has really helped to keep people engaged and active beyond our programmes. [...] As a result of the success of the groups in Eastern leisure centre we have doubled our class sizes and started the role out to other centres in Cardiff. Our vision is to have these offers available in a number of locations in Cardiff and the Vale.

HUW DAVIES, AHP LEAD FOR COMMUNITY NEURO REHABILITATION / LIVE WELL PROJECT LEAD (ESCAPE TEAM)

“ The pain in my back is gone completely. I began with back, hip and shin pain. Now because of this group my back is completely fine. My posture is a lot better and I’m ensuring I’m sitting and standing better. My fear of pain is gone now that I understand what it is and how it’s got to this point. It’s just so friendly and attentive which makes the whole exercise and pain management easier. I have started doing weights and bike in the gym which I would never have done because of my back. Lost 2 stone and looking to continue losing weight and join the leisure discount.

PARTICIPANT AT EASTERN LEISURE CENTRE



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Workforce, Skills & Knowledge

Managing such a broad range of facilities and services, the workforce of leisure and culture trusts are highly skilled and specialised in amongst other exercise referral, mental health and wellbeing, social care, rehabilitation and recovery, coaching healthy lifestyles, weight management, and ill health management and prevention.

Their workforce has experience working with people from all ages and at all stages of life – from children and young people to pregnant women and the elderly. They take a person-centred approach to their work and are experienced working with people at different skill and ability levels, whether those are digital skills, life-altering illnesses such as Alzheimer’s disease, long-term health conditions, or children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities.

In addition to these skills and knowledge, leisure and culture trusts have well-established safeguarding policies, reassuring the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, and respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of participants.

Trusts actively invest in their staff to create a skilled workforce that can support larger groups of people. Therefore, their staff has the experience to support the NHS with addressing their waiting lists and offering a tailored and specialised service that improves patients’ health and wellbeing.

CASE STUDY FEEL GOOD FOR LIFE BRIDGEND

Halo Leisure and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Overview

Feel Good for Life aims to support people living with dementia, loneliness and depression, and carers to be physically active and reduce feelings of social isolation. With centres being closed for the majority of 2020, the aims were to provide a remote service that would help to keep participants motivated to stay active at home, reduce feelings of social isolation and stay connected with essential services.

Throughout the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and the Community Dementia Support Team specifically had to focus on patients who have limited to no support in their homes, providing only urgent care and halting all socialisation support activities to prioritise clinical interventions. Therefore, there was an increasing need for Halo Leisure to provide socialisation support during the crisis. This allowed health care professionals to continue to socially prescribe to the Feel Good for Life programme.

Challenge to overcome

During March–August 2020, under government advice, people over the age of 70 – many of whom were living with dementia – were asked to stay at home for an extensive period.

The situation caused panic, stress and anxiety for people with dementia, their loved ones and their carers. Whilst government advice was to stay physically active to help maintain physical and mental wellbeing, many people affected by dementia, including carers, found it hard to think of new activities around the home.

Actions taken

- Adapted Feel Good For Life programme during lockdown, including a telephone support service and tailored on-line exercise videos.
- Halo’s National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) instructor that provides the physical activity element of the ‘Feel Good for Life’ sessions was not furloughed. This led to 320 support calls over the 19-week lockdown period in 2020.
- Signposting participants that needed support with food shopping and prescription collection to Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisation’s (BAVO) community navigators. BAVO, in turn, signposted people to the Feel Good For Life programme.
- Provision of virtual exercise videos specific for ages 60+.
- Monthly newsletters that contained exercises for participants to try at home and reminiscence activities to keep them mentally stimulated.

Outcomes

- Staying physically active (at home) became accessible
- Make staying physically active accessible
- Signpost people to other community-support services
- Reduce feelings of social isolation
- Create a personalised support network
- Reduce and prevent physical and mental health decline of people with Dementia and their carers while shielding

Results and benefits

A video with feedback from participants can be viewed on Halo Leisure's YouTube channel [here](#).

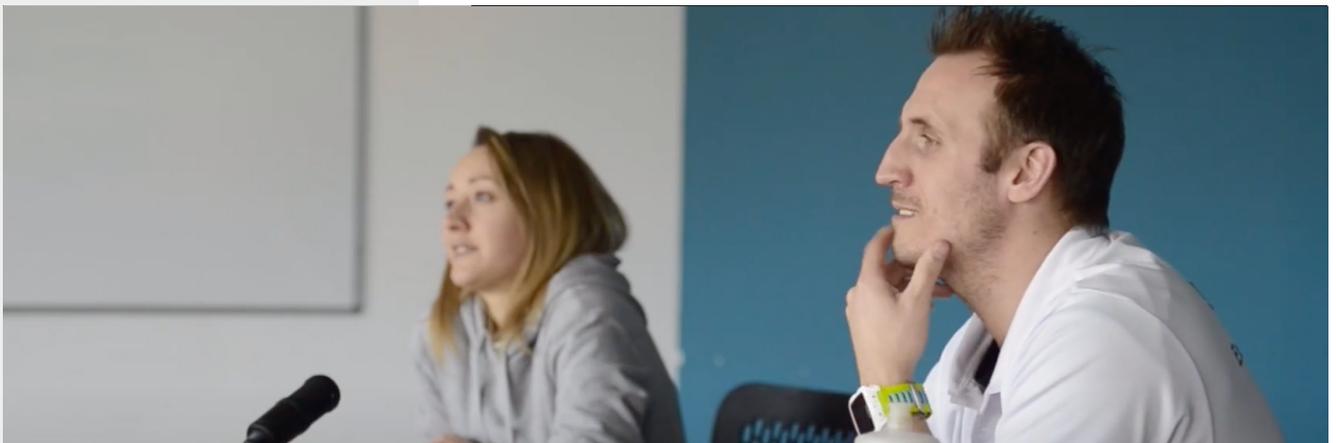
“ My husband's mobility was starting to decline and this was accelerated with leisure centres being closed and not able to attend the swimming sessions, which he loved. The weekly phone calls were great and made us feel still included with the programme and motivated to stay active at home. My husband enjoyed the puzzles in the newsletters, it helped to keep his mind active.

PARTICIPANT

“ Although my husband is no longer well enough to attend the 'Feel Good for Life' sessions, I still like to attend as talking to the staff and other carers that are going through similar difficulties to me, gives me a great deal of support. I have problems with my hip but the exercises are always adaptable, I always leave the sessions feeling uplifted and motivated to be more active.

PARTICIPANT

...their staff has the experience to support the NHS with addressing their waiting lists and offering a tailored and specialised service that improves patients' health and wellbeing



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Reach Into Communities

Providing opportunities to be active or culturally engaged close to or at home brings a community-based approach to everything that leisure and culture trusts do. Being rooted in their community, trusts can detect changes in people's life and health early through their personal, continuous interaction with customers, and, in response, provide preventative activities, rehabilitation, treatment and ongoing care as close to home as possible.

Being people-centred organisations, however, they do not solely rely on people being able to join them at their local facilities and venues, which is why leisure and culture trusts integrate care into communities through a wide range of local and regional partnerships. Most commonly, this includes delivering activities in care homes, working in and with schools, and collaborating with other local community groups.

CASE STUDY

REMINISCENCE THERAPY IN CARE HOMES BRIDGEND

Awen Cultural Trust and Bridgend County Borough Council

Overview

Virtual reality (VR) technology has been used to transport the residents of Bryn Y Cae and Tŷ Cwm Ogwr Care Homes in Bridgend on wildlife adventures, space flights and visits to cities across the world, without leaving the comfort and safety of their own armchair, thanks to a creative wellbeing project delivered by Awen Cultural Trust and Bridgend County Borough Council.

Actions taken

The project, which was funded by Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund 'Connected Communities' Grant - administered by Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations – worked with Cardiff-based Rescape Innovation to create 12 personalised VR experiences for residents with dementia, aimed at unlocking memories and provoking conversations.

VR technology is becoming increasingly popular within the care sector as reminiscence therapy, taking residents to places of interest and importance which otherwise they would be physically incapable of visiting. The films are shot in 360 degrees to make the experiences highly immersive, and residents use headsets, looking in any direction to get a different perspective.

Takeaway tips:

- Awen Cultural Trust had already developed good relationships with local care homes, which made the process of on-boarding more effective and efficient.
- VR equipment is becoming much more affordable and accessible, with 360 degree films available to buy online.
- Participants were sat in a wheelchair to enable the carer to change the angles of view. This made it safer and reduced the amount of pressure on their necks to look around, as some participants may have restricted movement.
- A tablet (iPad) was used as an alternative platform to experience the video, if the participant was unable/did not want to use the VR headsets.

Outcomes

- Improved wellbeing of the participants.
- Improved connections and relationships between family members, carers and participants.
- Development of new skills for carers and family members by utilising this new technology.
- Opportunity to assess benefits of a new approach to treating anxiety and depression.
- The benefits to the participants included:
 - Enjoyment of the sessions, benefits from feeling of being outside in gardens and other virtual spaces.
 - Elevation of mood during and after the sessions.
 - Ability to socialise with staff and each other about their experience.

Results and benefits

“ It has been great to be able to bring new technology into the care home for residents to enjoy. Seeing their response has been a joy to watch especially when it was so real to them. I wasn't sure what kind of reaction we were going to get from the residents with dementia, but it was wonderful. They were completely immersed in the experience, and for them to feel they were out in the garden and interacting with the flowers, after being isolated due to Covid for so long, was just lovely to see.

PENNY GRIFFITHS, MANAGER OF BRYN Y CAE CARE HOME

“ Mags really interacted positively. Wanted to put her hand out to touch flower. Mags said it was a wonderful experience, really magical. Felt really relaxed and felt like she was walking there. Mags had a great big smile on her face when it finished. Spoke to Mags an hour later on how she felt and still felt happy and remembered the garden.

FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS (NOTED DOWN BY THEIR CARER)

One Bryn Y Cae resident to benefit from this creative wellbeing project was 105-year-old Dolly, originally from the Netherlands, who particularly liked the VR garden experience, as it reminded her of a time when she cared for a disabled child at a residential home.



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ACTIVITIES

Trusts' work reduces pressure on the NHS by reducing not only the need to access NHS services but by reducing the time people need to wait for treatment, and by helping people stay well. They can reduce the time patients spend in hospitals and in NHS care through prehabilitation, rehabilitation, and preventative services.

Providing an accessible and people-centred way to stay well close or at home, the wider activities they provide address some of our nation's most pressing health challenges, including recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, keeping good mental health, and addressing loneliness and social isolation.

As part of their preventative and person-centred approach to health, leisure- and culture trusts manage social prescribing programmes. These programmes aim to reduce inequalities in ill health by providing access to tailored and supervised physical activity and cultural activity that improves people's physical and mental health.

Social prescribing enables health professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services, offering a holistic way to health and enabling people to take greater ownership of their own health³. Examples of social prescribing include exercise referral, arts and culture activities, gardening, health walks, and a range of sport activity.

Post-pandemic recovery

Wales is fortunate to have a National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS), funded by Welsh Government, which standardises exercise referral opportunities across all Local Authorities and Local Health Boards⁴. NERS is managed locally by leisure trusts and their workforce, providing an opportunity to the health sector to offer a person-centred approach to healthy living considering personal preferences, needs and ability to engage. The scheme is an evidenced based health intervention that incorporates physical activity and behavioural change. The aim of NERS is to reduce the inequalities in ill health by providing access to tailored and supervised physical activity.

While leisure and culture trusts cannot address all medical conditions, they can provide activities while patients wait for their medical treatments or surgery and therefore reduce the NHS' waiting lists. These activities reduce the need for further medical intervention, increase people's chances for recovery and provide rehabilitation support.

⁴ For more information about NERS, please visit the website of the Welsh Local Government Association who centrally manage the scheme on behalf of Welsh Government:
wlga.wales/national-exercise-referral-scheme-ners



³ For more information, see: primarycareone.nhs.wales/topics1/prevention/social-prescribing/

CASE STUDY

GARETH'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE NATIONAL EXERCISE REFERRAL SCHEME

BLAENAU GWENT Aneurin Leisure and local GP services

Overview

Gareth was 28 when he started on the National Exercise Referral Scheme in Blaenau Gwent. He had just been made redundant and had started living unhealthy with high alcohol consumption and eating a processed diet with high saturated fats. He felt anxious, felt he was at the bottom of a pit, and did not recognise the person staring back at him in the mirror. He had cut himself off from family and friends and felt isolated.

Actions taken

- Gareth referred himself to his GP.
- The GP recommended the NERS scheme as a medication for Gareth's mental health, physical well-being and to create new positive habits.
- The GP notified Aneurin Leisure that they had referred Gareth. The Aneurin Leisure team got Gareth booked in the following day.
- During the first consultation, the NERS team got to know Gareth, what he wanted to achieve, what was stopping him, completed a body analysis, and physical (6-minute walk) and functional (RHR) tests. They completed all the relevant informed consent, SPAQ physical activity questionnaire, and put a plan together bespoke to Gareth.

Outcomes

- Aneurin Leisure advised of the NERS sessions, including gym, fitness classes, and swimming to build the program of the activities Gareth liked. They met him for the first 2-weeks.
- The start of the third week Gareth did not attend, so they called him, and learned that his anxiety was at its worst point. They suggested him to make contact with friends and family, and informed him that they would contact him at an appropriate time.
- 3-weeks later they contacted Gareth, who by this point had repaired his relationship with family and friends and felt supported and motivated to start the NERS scheme again.
- When the NERS team met Gareth again, he was a completely different person: focused, determined and motivated to see it through.
- At the 4-week meeting, Gareth had made significant improvements and the NERS team needed to change his plan accordingly to help him progress further.
- At 12-weeks, Gareth found a new job. He felt that due to the scheme, his mental and social wellbeing along with his confidence and self-esteem had 'skyrocketed' which made him believe he deserved the job.
- At week 16, Gareth had not only improved his lifestyle in the most positive of ways, but he had also become an advocate for the NERS service and wanted other people to know it existed and how much it had helped him.

Results and benefits

Gareth's medical journey showed impressive progress in just 16 weeks:

	Week 1	Week 16
Weight	92kg	84kg
BMI	28.1	23.9
Body Fat	21.2%	12.2%
Resting Heart Rate	77BPM	62BPM
WEMWBS*	21	58
Sit to stands**	15	26
Exercise per week	0 hours	6 hours

* The WEMWBS scores from 14 (low state mental wellbeing) – 70 (high state mental wellbeing)

**Sit to stand test consists of how many times you can move from seated to standing in 30 seconds.

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Mental health



Enabling and supporting mental wellbeing is embedded in the work of all leisure- and culture trusts, for both their local communities, and for their workforce. Their services reflect the need for wide and varied support across the life course, from birth to older adults, and often combine the benefits of physical activity with mental wellbeing.

Examples of their work include arts in health programmes, mental health training for staff, programmes to support young people's mental wellbeing, carers support networks, books on mental health available on prescription, and physical activity referral schemes, with targeted mental health interventions.

CASE STUDY THE M WORD SWANSEA Freedom Leisure

Overview

The M Word began when one of Freedom Leisure's fitness instructors in Penyrheol, found herself struggling with menopause and the symptoms it comes with. She knew other women were also finding menopause a challenge, so she decided, alongside the Penyrheol management team, to do something to address it.

Challenge to overcome

Some women sail through menopause; some women have minor issues; many women find it physically and psychologically distressing and troublesome, and for a minority of women -- but even one is too many -- they harm themselves while going through the change of life. Perimenopause, which can start as early as your 30s or early 40s, can also be difficult. At this time in a woman's life, it can feel as if you're losing your ability to enjoy your life, and you can feel as if you're losing your mind. There can also be a sudden drop-off in energy, as well as many other debilitating symptoms.

Actions taken

The team came up with the concept of the 'M Word' – yoga for menopause.

The M Word is held once a month. The class is made up of circle discussion where women in the class share their thoughts and experience and exercises to help combat symptoms.

Outcomes

- Remove the stigma around menopause
- Bring women together to help share experiences and create a safe space for discussions
- Encourage women to stay active during menopause
- Highlight the benefits of being active

Results and benefits

The Freedom Leisure team in Penyrheol have tackled the stigma of menopause head on and are empowering women to do the same.

“ I should emphasise that my line manager, the centre manager, the whole team at Penyrheol, and the area manager, have all been hugely supportive. My friend who acts as the 'meeter and greeter' in my classes, as well as my husband, have also been very supportive and helpful. And the customers have been absolutely lovely, appreciative and helpful to each other. This isn't 'my' project -- it belongs to all of us and would not be a success without teamwork and mutual support.
FITNESS INSTRUCTOR IN PENYRHEOL WHO RAISED THE CHALLENGE OF MENOPAUSE

“ What shocked me about THE CHANGE was the sheer violence of it. The harmony I work hard to keep between my body and mind had suddenly gone. The good news is that over time I made an accommodation of this new me.
FORMER NURSE AND PARTICIPANT

“ I am telling all my friends in work about the classes! They always ask me what we've done. I find the 'legs up the wall' pose really helps me to relax before I go to bed. I feel more 'normal' after our chats knowing that others are going through the same things.
PARTICIPANT

Loneliness and social isolation



Trusts facilities and services are adapted to be inclusive and accessible to everyone in their community. They respond to demographic and societal changes, and each leisure or culture trust delivers slightly different programmes and offers reflecting the needs of their communities. More often than not, their person-centred approach to delivering public leisure and culture services means that their programmes come with an extensive social support network, and provide a safe and inclusive space where people feel welcome and can connect with others.

CASE STUDY READING FRIENDS FLINTSHIRE

Aura Leisure & Libraries

Overview

'Reading Friends' brings people together to read, share stories, meet new people, make friendships and have fun. Staff use reading – whether books, magazines, newspapers, or anything else – to start everyone chatting. Reading Friends is not a traditional book club – instead the books are used to start a conversation and improve wellbeing.

Actions taken

Launched by The Reading Agency in 2017 with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, AURA's 'Reading Friends' tackles loneliness using reading to start conversations and connect people socially.

AURA works in partnership with Literature Wales and The Reading Agency to deliver their 'Reading Friends' service.

Several Reading Friends groups are offered across Aura libraries and via Zoom to bring people together through a love of books and stories. They also have a group for Welsh Speakers and one for Welsh Learners as well as groups for children and young people which are open to all but especially people experiencing isolation and loneliness.

Outcomes

- Reducing social isolation
- Creating new connections within communities

Results and benefits

“ Miss A used to attend the face-to-face Reading Friends group pre lockdown in Flint. She is retired and lives on her own and is passionate about reading and enjoys sharing what she has read and hearing about what others like, which is why Reading Friends appealed to her so much.

“ It is a relaxed social activity aimed at improving wellbeing with books and stories at its heart rather than 'getting very serious about all reading the same title'. She never knows which way the conversation will turn and she enjoys the sessions where we share poetry because of the way it can touch you. She had been missing the regular contact and emotional lift of the Reading Friends groups and took the opportunity to join the new Zoom Reading Friends despite her aversion and phobia to going online.

“ I was able to support her step-by-step to access the group and she has attended every Tuesday monthly session since we started in November. It has given her the confidence to try new authors and request books through our 'Select and Collect' service. She also says she believes it has reinvigorated her reading habits after the dark months of the first lockdown. As the months have gone on she has shared more about herself and feels a sense of achievement by being able to access the group. She has found much common ground with a young mum who also attends who she would probably have never met before as she lives in Buckley.

The cross generational friendship is a bonus and seeing people who are nearly 40 years apart in age becoming friends is wonderful. Now she has mastered the technology, one of the joys of the group for her is meeting regardless of location and she looks forward to the conversations.

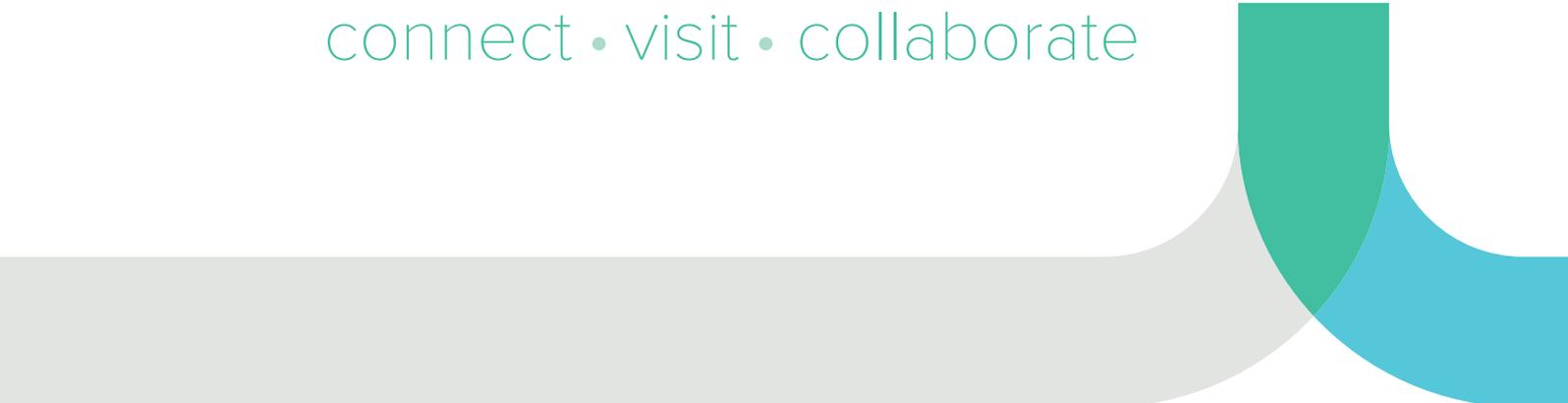
Conclusion

The large network of non-profit distributing leisure and culture trusts in Wales is ideally positioned to support with some of the NHS' most pressing challenges, including the prevention of ill health, addressing health inequalities, and encouraging lifelong wellbeing.

With the pressures on our health and care system exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, now is the time to recognise the contribution that leisure and culture trusts have already made to our NHS during the pandemic, and to engage them as a key partner to improve population health and wellbeing. By bringing together health services with leisure and culture, we can provide greater support to communities and relieve pressure on the NHS.

We would encourage you to connect, visit and collaborate with your local leisure or culture trust to plan for how their facilities, workforce, and activities may support you to integrate care into communities.

connect • visit • collaborate



Appendix

Leisure and Culture Trusts in Wales

Aneurin Leisure

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
aneurinleisure.org.uk

Aura Leisure & Libraries

Flintshire
aura.wales

Awen Cultural Trust

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council,
Bridgend County Borough Council, Rhondda
Cynon Taf County Borough Council
awen-wales.com

Celtic Leisure

Neath Port Talbot Council
celticleisure.org

Freedom Leisure

Powys County Council, Swansea Council,
Wrexham County Borough Council
freedom-leisure.co.uk

Greenwich Leisure Limited

Cardiff County Council
better.org.uk/leisure-centre/cardiff

Halo Leisure

Bridgend County Borough Council
haloleisure.org.uk

Newport Live

Newport City Council
newportlive.co.uk/en

Torfaen Leisure Trust

Torfaen County Borough Council
torfaenleisuretrust.co.uk

Wales National Pool Swansea

Swansea Council
swanseabaysportspark.wales/swim-at-wales-national-pool-swansea

Wellbeing@Merthyr

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
wellbeingmerthyr.co.uk/venues



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