



**Supporting Welsh NHS staff  
wellbeing throughout  
COVID-19**

## Introduction

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS staff have become the heroes on the frontline of our national fight against the virus. Time and again, they have gone above and beyond the call of duty to protect people from the direct harms of COVID-19, and also continued to support patients with other health conditions.

The NHS is Wales' biggest employer, currently employing nearly 100,000 people, and providing a significant contribution to the national and local economy. The delivery of health and care services is completely dependent on our workforce, who work in partnership with a range of organisations. Without them, high quality healthcare services simply could not be provided.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the challenges that face the health and social care workforce. Across the system, we have seen first-hand the incredible sacrifices so many have made to protect, help and support the most vulnerable, not just on hospital wards, but also in the community. The pandemic has brought into focus the key role NHS Wales organisations play in supporting the health and wellbeing of the population as well as their staff.

Having a healthy, motivated, supported and engaged workforce leads to better outcomes and experiences for service users. However, as we enter the eleventh month of COVID-19 pressures, the NHS Wales workforce is facing one of the most difficult times in its history. Staff across the system are feeling exhausted and fatigued, not just from rising COVID-19 cases, but from increasing demand on other healthcare services. The health and wellbeing of the NHS Wales workforce is of critical importance.

NHS leaders recognise the challenges faced by the NHS workforce, but in these unique times and with so many different ways of working, we know some staff may find it hard to access the support that is on offer. Health Boards and NHS Trusts across Wales have had to adapt their organisations in unique ways to support the health and wellbeing of their staff. Staff health and wellbeing is also a national priority, and as such, it has been a key focus of the Special Health Authority with responsibility for the education, training, development and shaping of the workforce – Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). Recognising the importance of staff health and wellbeing is the foundation of the recently launched [‘Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care’](#), developed by HEIW and Social Care Wales. The Strategy sets out the vision, ambition and approaches needed to put wellbeing at the heart of workforce planning across the health and social care system in Wales.

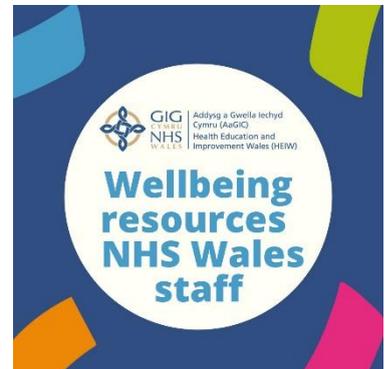
The aim of this briefing is to showcase just some of the initiatives that have been introduced across NHS Wales to support staff health and wellbeing, and it is also a reminder to staff that help and support is available to you, should you need it.

## How NHS organisations are working with partners to support the NHS workforce throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

### Launch of a digital resource platform

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) was established in October 2018 as the 11th member of the NHS Wales family and a Special Health Authority to drive the transformation of the health workforce in Wales. It has a central focus on education and training, along with a number of other significant functions including workforce planning and intelligence, leadership development, workforce modernisation and careers.

Among the organisation's key commitments is to make the NHS in Wales an exemplar employer in its support for wellbeing at work. Working with partners from across NHS Wales, HEIW developed and launched a [digital resource platform](#) which provides a central repository for COVID-19 health and wellbeing resources and information for the health and care workforce across Wales. The platform includes a single point of access to all Health Board and NHS Trusts' staff intranet sites, national information websites, Trade Union sites, helplines and wellbeing apps. The resource is accessible via the COVID-19 section of the HEIW website [heiw.nhs.wales](http://heiw.nhs.wales) and is updated on a regular basis.



### Keeping the focus on health and wellbeing

During the 17 days of the 'firebreak' lockdown, HEIW ran a dedicated social media campaign reminding NHS staff across Wales of the health and wellbeing resources and support available via the digital platform. This was followed up by a Christmas health and wellbeing campaign in collaboration with Social Care Wales, the Samaritans, Silver Cloud, Health for Health Professionals, Public Health Wales NHS Trust and Case-UK.

The sub-group responsible for delivering the digital platform has now transitioned into the **National Health and Wellbeing Network**, to which HEIW provides leadership and programme management support. The Network is made up of employee wellbeing, occupational health and clinical psychology experts from the seven Health Boards, three NHS Trusts, Social Care Wales, the Welsh Government and Trade Unions.

## Support mechanisms developed on an all-Wales basis for NHS Wales staff

Working with key stakeholders across the system, NHS Wales and HEIW colleagues enhanced and promoted awareness of resources and specialist services designed to support the health and care workforce. These include:

### Health for Health Professionals Wales

Health for Health Professionals Wales (HHP Wales) offers a free, confidential service that provides NHS staff, students and volunteers in Wales with access to various levels of psychological and mental health support. The service can be accessed via an informative [website](#), an online [self-referral form](#), a helpline (0800 058 2738), or via email - [HHPCOVID19@cf.ac.uk](mailto:HHPCOVID19@cf.ac.uk). The service is funded by Welsh Government and administered by Cardiff University.

### SilverCloud

SilverCloud is an online course designed to help NHS staff manage feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. Users work through a series of topics selected by a therapist to address specific needs. The eight-week course is designed to be completed in the user's own time and at their own pace. The programmes are underpinned by proven scientific methods including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and positive psychology. NHS Wales staff can sign up [here](#).



**SilverCloud**  
Digital Mental Health Platform

### Samaritans support line

The Samaritans Support Line is a confidential support line for health and social care workers and volunteers based in England and Wales. The support lines are run by Samaritans and all calls are answered by trained Samaritans volunteers, who provide confidential support.

The English language support line for NHS and social care workers and volunteers is free to call and is available everyday between 7am-11pm on 0800 484 0555. The Welsh language support line for NHS and social care workers and volunteers is free to call, and is available every evening, between 7pm-11pm, on 0808 164.

## Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

### Wellbeing website

The Health Board's (ABUHB) Employee Wellbeing Service website is now fully operational and bilingual. It is full of helpful advice and resources and is available to access on tablets and smartphones outside of a work environment. [www.aneurinbevanwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.aneurinbevanwellbeing.co.uk)

### Employee Wellbeing Psychological Therapy Service (EWPTS)

The EWPTS is the psychological therapy arm of the Employee Well-being Service. The service remains busy but fully functional, and is able to offer face to face, video and phone based therapeutic support. Using the newly recruited Psychologists and Administrator ABUHB are developing plans to offer a rapid access and evidence-based trauma pathway in addition to their well-established Counselling pathway. They hope to have this ready for February.

### Organisational Wellbeing Consultancy

The service offers bespoke support and consultation to managers, teams and departments across ABUHB. Support is currently being provided to several teams, wards and departments.

### Psychological well-being drop in sessions

In response to the recognised increase in overt distress in employees across hospitals, a number of drop-in services are now being offered to a range of wards and departments across the Health Board by Employee Wellbeing psychologists. Two day-long drop-in sessions a week are being offered to Estates and Facilities staff within the Grange University Hospital, and ward-based drop-ins have been arranged within both general medical and COVID-19 wards. Staff within ICU continue to be supported directly by both their in-house psychology team and the Employee Wellbeing Service.

### Walk and Talk



Although technology is amazing, nothing can beat face-to-face meetings, but how can we do this safely? Say hello to ABUHB Walk and Talk sessions, their latest engagement event. ABUHB are currently piloting these in two hospitals during December and are busy putting together a programme of events to cover all the hospitals in the Health Board area during January, February and March 2021.

## Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

### Staff Wellbeing Support Service (SWSS)

As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic a Staff Wellbeing Support Service (SWSS) was established to provide staff with an informal and independent support mechanism during these unprecedented times. A SWSS was established on each of the 3 acute sites within the Health Board with a physical presence and was staffed 5 days a week. They provide a tiered service for staff with an informal drop-in service, a telephone service and 1:1 sessions as required. They are staffed by clinical psychologists who volunteered as part of the response to COVID-19. To date, over 1,846 staff members have accessed the service and the SWSS have provided targeted team interventions by request both on acute and community sites.

### Looking after your back and spinal health in work

BACK-on-LINETM is an online information system designed in collaboration between Occupational Health, Health & Safety and Manual Handling to help people look after their back and spinal health in work. It was developed by a Cardiff University team of academics for School of Healthcare Sciences, School of Engineering and Data Innovation Research Institute in collaboration with physiotherapists and occupational health managers from NHS Wales. BACK-on-LINETM is currently being launched to workforce across a range of sectors including healthcare (NHS Wales and England), transport (Transport for London) and higher education (Cardiff University).

### Mental health and wellbeing

The Health Board has introduced a range of initiatives to support staff mental health and wellbeing. The initiatives include:

- Supporting and introducing the free **Health for Health Professionals Wales Service** – a free mental health support service available across Wales.
- Designing and distributing a **Mental Wellbeing Newsletter**. The Newsletter includes all the support and resources available for all staff, including talking therapies, self-help, self-referral options etc.
- Supporting the Health Boards **mental wellbeing champions** with up-to-date information of programmes and key wellbeing aspects so they can continue to support colleagues on the frontline with conversations, support and signposting to specialist services.
- Updating the **mental wellbeing intranet** pages to reflect all the recent activity and programmes happening across the Health Board so staff were up-to-date on wellbeing initiatives and support.

## Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

### Rapid Access for Staff

During the initial wave of the pandemic in March 2020, the Employee Wellbeing Service at Cardiff and Vale UHB moved to telephone sessions for staff. Understanding the pressures staff were under, the Health Board collaborated with their Psychology and other mental health departments to develop a rapid access pathway for staff. This service was open 8am to 8pm 5 days a week, with staff having rapid access to a member of a mental health practitioner offering support. When this ended in June 2020 the Employee Health and Wellbeing Service were able to start providing Attend Anywhere video sessions for staff.

**Employee Health and Wellbeing Wellbeing this winter - December 2020**

For some, the month of December is a happy and exciting time but it can be a difficult and lonely period for others. This could be particularly true of this festive season, when it may not be possible to see our loved ones over Christmas.

**Steps for keeping yourself well this December**

- Connect with others: it may not be possible to physically be with others this year, but checking in by text, video calls and phone calls are all ways to keep connected. Consider planning online Christmas activities such as quizzes, hang-outs or even sharing Christmas dinners over video call.
- Stay active: gentle movement or exercise can help us to feel more relaxed and unwind. You can access [yoln's our list](#) a free exercise platform for NHS staff.
- Be mindful: mindfulness can help us feel more focused in the present moment, and has been shown to help with anxiety and depressive symptoms. [Palouse mindfulness](#) provides a free mindfulness course, or you may prefer to use [gigafitness app](#), some of which are free for NHS staff.
- Be conscious of your alcohol consumption: many people find that their alcohol consumption increases over the Christmas period. [Kwik-Save](#) provides tips for helping you to better manage your drinking.
- Make time to rest: this can be difficult over the festive period, but make sure to carve-out time just for you. You could incorporate the tips above, e.g. taking time for mindfulness or going for a walk.

**December Wellbeing workshops**

<p><b>Introduction to Compassion and Self-Care</b></p> <p>1.30 - 3.30pm 15 December 2020</p> <p>Find out more and book a place</p>	<p><b>Mindfulness Q&amp;A</b></p> <p>1.30 - 2.30pm 22 December 2020</p> <p>Find out more and book a place</p>
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The Employee Health and Wellbeing Service also provides support through counselling, guided self-help and signposting to other resources or services.

In addition to telephone appointments, we are now offering video call appointments using the 'Attend Anywhere' platform. Call 02920 744465 or email [employee.wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:employee.wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk) to refer yourself.

**Further support**

If you are struggling, you can find support here:

- Samaritans offer a free, confidential telephone helpline where you can talk to someone about anything that is troubling you. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call: 116 123
- CALL is a mental health helpline, offering a confidential listening service. The service is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call 0800 132 737 or text help to 81060.
- Health for Health Professionals Wales are providing free mental health support to all Health Professionals and Healthcare Students working in NHS Wales: <https://www.hhpwales.co.uk/>

If you are in crisis and do not feel you can keep yourself safe, contact your GP or the emergency services on 999 or 111.

Cardiff and Vale UHB took all their workshops online and introduced a monthly drop-in for staff around a themed mental health issue. This theme was also carried forward in the organisations monthly newsletter. With so much information being promoted, the Health Board took the decision to streamline their resources into a general resources pack focusing on specific issues (stress, low mood, assertiveness, sleep etc.). The Health Board's Guided Self Help has proven to be a valuable resource for staff wanting a structured, focused method of working. The Health Board also took steps to make workshops more accessible and developed a YouTube Channel where they uploaded all their workshops so staff can access at their convenience.

### Support for managers

The Health Board also understood the need to support managers and senior managers in how best they could support their teams. The Health Board put together a manager's pack which pulled together resources on areas like 'how to huddle', 'end of shift checklist' and links to training around mental health like REACT and Psychological First Aid. The Health Board developed a Senior Managers checklist of Do's and Don'ts and hosted virtual Q&A's for Managers, inviting them to come along and hear what support is available for their teams.

## Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

### Arts and health programme boosts staff wellbeing

The Arts and Health Coordinator, a new post created in 2020 to improve emotional health and positivity within the Health Board, has been working with partners to develop a range of arts and health wellbeing initiatives for staff. The initiatives include staff wellbeing workshops online and in person, and working with the Staff Wellbeing Team in developing wellbeing art packs and worksheets for staff to use as 15 minute relaxation breaks when working on wards. Other initiatives that have been established include a Health Board staff choir, who performed online for the first time as part of the Staff Gratitude Event in December. The Health Board has also been working with Movement Artist, Tania Acarron, on a pilot staff wellbeing online movement workshop which they hope to develop further in the new year.



### Employee Wellbeing Services

The below diagram summarises the employee wellbeing services within the Health Board.

## EMPLOYEE WELLBEING SERVICES



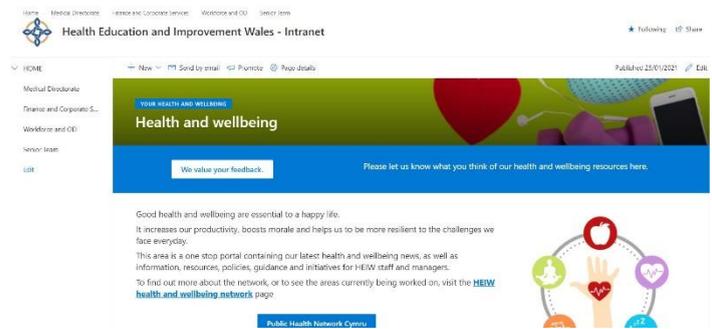
How might I be feeling?	What might help me?
I feel well and want to stay emotionally healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recharge Rooms</li> <li>Mindfulness one off sessions accessed via <a href="mailto:CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk">CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk</a></li> <li>Wellbeing Blogs at <a href="http://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing">cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing</a></li> <li>Wellbeing self-care workshops accessed via <a href="mailto:CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk">CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk</a></li> </ul>
I am beginning to struggle with my emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-help workbooks and resources at <a href="http://www.vivup.co.uk">www.vivup.co.uk</a></li> <li>24/7 Vivup telephone helpline – 03303 800 658</li> <li>Free on-line resources on <a href="http://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing">cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing</a></li> <li>Reading Well self-help books via CTM Library service and public libraries</li> <li>Self-care following Trauma webinar accessed via <a href="mailto:CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk">CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk</a></li> <li>Psycho educational courses – Anxiety Management, Low mood/depression, Stress and Trauma. Accessed via <a href="mailto:CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk">CTM.WellbeingService@wales.nhs.uk</a></li> </ul>
I am struggling with my emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-referral / Manager referral to Vivup Counselling service. Access via <a href="http://www.vivup.co.uk">www.vivup.co.uk</a> or 03303 800 658</li> <li>Mindfulness based living course – Self-referral via <a href="mailto:CTM.Wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk">CTM.Wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk</a></li> <li>For Psychological Trauma – Health for Health Professions Wales helpline (9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday) - telephone: 0800 058 2738</li> <li>Visit <a href="http://www.hhpwales.co.uk">www.hhpwales.co.uk</a> for more information</li> </ul>
I am really struggling with my emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak to your GP</li> </ul>

For more information please go to [cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing](http://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/staffwellbeing)

## Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

HEIW has been and continues to support its own staff during these difficult times. In March 2020, the HEIW offices closed and staff had to adapt quickly to working from home and virtually. To support them with this, staff were able to take home key items of IT equipment such as screens, with IT support being provided online and via telephone.

Weekly written updates from the CEO and Deputy CEO were also issued to staff via email and the organisation's intranet to keep staff up to date and in touch with each other. In addition, the monthly staff open forum usually held in person was moved online attracting approximately 80 staff per session - with the second Covid wave the number of forums increased to fortnightly.



Various staff networks across HEIW have also developed new and innovative ways to support one another such as:

- Cuppa Catchup: A virtual daily 'water cooler' chat to just meet and talk.
- Need a Friendly Ear: A network of wellbeing, inclusion and culture champions offering a friendly ear.
- Cymuned: A digital community for staff to connect.

Whilst working virtually, HEIW conducted various staff surveys on health and wellbeing and working from home to understand the changing needs of the workforce. In June, an organisation-wide COVID-19 Health Needs Assessment was conducted. Based on the results of the survey, and linked to the [5 Ways of Wellbeing](#), a communications campaign was launched providing signposting to staff health and wellbeing resources such as: finance services; home working; mental health; physical activity; sleep, and domestic abuse.

HEIW has also offered a range of health and wellbeing education sessions to staff including Maximising Your Day workshops and Mindfulness Based Living courses. At the same time, HEIW has continued to support both internally and externally a number of awareness days including Alcohol Awareness, Talk Money, Work Life Week and Mental Health Awareness.

### Professional Support Unit (PSU)

HEIW also provides professional support to all doctors and dentists in training in Wales. The PSU provides confidential guidance and pastoral support to help trainees progress promoting wellbeing and personal development.

To contact the PSU email: [HEIW.ProfessionalSupport@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:HEIW.ProfessionalSupport@wales.nhs.uk) PSU resources are available at <https://psu.walesdeanery.org/>

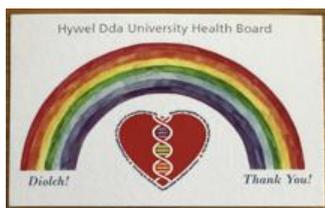
## Hywel Dda University Health Board

The psychological wellbeing of staff has been a priority for HDUHB over recent years and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic emphasised this further. Early into the pandemic, a number of measures were implemented to strengthen the provision of Staff Psychological Wellbeing Services, these included:

- A robust psychological wellbeing plan to mirror the phases of the pandemic.
- Expansion of service provision to include a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme delivered by Care First, offering support to the in-house team.
- Establishment of a dedicated COVID-19 intranet page for staff, enabling wider access to self-help resources and toolkits.
- Publication of 'business' cards for staff members with details of Staff Psychological Wellbeing Services
- Provision of a wider coaching network, including over 160 of our key leaders.
- Introduced listening spaces for staff to share experiences.

Communicating wellbeing messages for staff was given high priority with regular updates on HDUHBs global platform including:

- Sharing of 'Staff Well Being Resource of the Week' and 'Staff Well Being personal stories'.
- Publication of regular vlogs from the Chair and CEO.
- Establishment of a staff Facebook page which includes a space for staff to share their reflections and feelings and a creative space called 'Poetry for the Pandemic'.



Three significant surveys have been conducted during recent months to discover more about staff experiences, particularly about their health and wellbeing at work and their engagement with the organisation.

Building resilience into the health system has been critical and the appreciation and recognition of staff has been a key part of that, including:

- Sending a Thankyou card to each member of staff.
- Continuation of Employee and Team of the Month nominations.
- A Faith calendar for 2021 designed by our BAME Advisory Group and gifted to each staff member.

## Powys Teaching Health Board

### **Improving access to information and support for staff health and wellbeing**

In May 2020, the Organisational Development team in the Health Board, in partnership with the Trade Unions, undertook a staff wellbeing survey. One of the clear outcomes of the survey was that whilst staff were actively accessing wellbeing information through the intranet and the recently created Stay Well in PTHB staff private Facebook group, they were seeking easier ways in which to access information to help support and manage their own wellbeing.

At the same time as the survey, PTHB was undergoing the migration to Office 365. This offered the opportunity to provide staff with a better platform to explore wellbeing information, by developing a specifically dedicated SharePoint site – the PTHB Stay Well Wellbeing Hub. The Hub has the following benefits:

- It can be accessed without a VPN (unlike the existing intranet) and with more staff working from home it means they can access wellbeing information more easily.
- It can be accessed from a work laptop, or personal mobile device through the SharePoint App, meaning that the site can be browsed at anytime, anywhere.
- The ability to easily create engaging content, linking external sites, videos, pictures and documents, without the need for extensive text.
- The ability to link the site to Teams, Forms and other Office 365 Apps, which has enabled the creating of a more interactive and less static site.
- The simplicity of editing the pages has meant that non-ICT staff have developed the pages, meaning the creation of a community of content editors, who are more specialist in wellbeing subjects and therefore the information is always up to date.
- Providing staff with information by wellbeing topics under the headings of Psychological, Physical and Environmental Wellbeing. The site also hosts updated Health and Safety pages and pages specifically focused on working in a COVID-19 environment.
- The site will continue to develop and become a hub for other staff initiatives, including nominating colleagues for Certificates of Outstanding Achievement, signing up to wellbeing workshops, or accessing SilverCloud or the counselling service.

### **Trial of the Florence Wellbeing Text Messaging Service**

The Health Board has been using Florence for some time to help patients with long-term conditions. 'Flo' has now been adapted to help support staff wellbeing by sending regular automated text messages of useful hints, tips and links that you might find interesting. Initially Flo is being trialled for up to 200 participants who will receive messages over a 5 week period and then evaluate it to see if it is something that is useful more widely.

## Public Health Wales NHS Trust

### Supporting staff wellbeing during our response to the pandemic and beyond

In April 2020 members of the Public Health Wales (PHW) Communications and Organisational Development teams developed an Internal Communications and Wellbeing Survey to understand colleagues' views about:

- The effectiveness of PHW staff communications during the lockdown period;
- The wellbeing resources provided;
- Working practices during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Resulting actions were put in place, including:

- The creation of PHW **Wellbeing and Engagement Partnership Group**, whose membership comprises Trade Union representatives and members of the People and OD, Communications and Estates/Facilities teams, and a lead from each directorate.
- Offering **Coaching for Line Managers** via in house coaches, who are able to provide sessions for line managers who need help building confidence to manage what could be new and/or challenging times with teams.
- A **Listening Service** to staff working in parts of PHW providing a first line response.
- Creation of a **Covid-19 Staff Information micro site** so all staff could access key information, including how to access mental health support, without having to use a VPN.
- Creation of **Staff Information and Guidance** and **Managers Toolkit** documents, which provide signposting support and practical information in a user friendly, accessible format.
- Ran a popular weekly **Wellbeing Wednesdays** campaign from April 2020, which featured a range of stories in support of PHW national [How are you doing?](#) campaign as well as a range of Diversity events/stories.
- PHW **Staff Diversity Networks** have seen their membership numbers swell, as staff have seen the benefits of having the peer support they offer and how this support can help.
- Worked with Improvement Cymru colleagues to offer regular 20 minute online **Care Space sessions**, run by trained in-house facilitators, which have allowed attendees to participate in shared experiences in a safe environment.
- As PHW are unable to host the customary **Welcome Engage Network Develop (WEND)** event for new starters in person, they created web pages comprising video clips of the usual range of speakers from across the organisation.

## Swansea Bay University Health Board

The Health Board continues to be committed to the wellbeing and resilience of its staff. The Staff Wellbeing service was enhanced with L&D Coaching staff and staff Counsellors to provide timely telephone support, with ongoing support for anxiety, low mood, bereavement and trauma. The Staff Wellbeing Twitter account, Intranet and network of 380 Wellbeing Champions communicated the support available and HR Manager networks, the Chief Executives blog and posters were used to increase staff awareness of both internal and external services.

### Supporting Trauma during COVID-19

The Health Board invested in the TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) model to help supervisors and line-managers identify the early behaviours that may indicate that staff are experiencing trauma. A cohort of 23 colleagues from across the Health Board have been trained to recognise when colleagues may be experiencing adverse effects of trauma and provide a framework to help them have a 'psychologically minded' conversation and signpost to support where necessary.

### Wellbeing Champion Support

The Health Board's Wellbeing Champion Network helped develop a number of 'relax, refresh and recharge' spaces across the Health Board, including converting the Morriston Hospital Physiotherapy gym into a calming space for reflection, exercise, yoga and mindfulness.



Charitable Funds support was accessed by some Wellbeing Champions and in Singleton Hospital, an underused outdoor space was converted into a socially distanced garden, enabling staff to have space to sit, relax and take 'time out' when needed.

A series of one-day Wellbeing and Resilience 'time out' sessions for staff entitled, 'Resilience Caring, the Swansea Bay Way' have been successfully delivered and now adapted to virtual delivery. These include time for reflection, external speakers promoting wellbeing and fun activities aimed at recharging staff 'wellbeing batteries'.

The hard work of all the staff involved in the Staff Wellbeing services was recognised in the 'National 2020 Personnel Today, Occupational Health and Wellbeing Awards' with the service winning the 'Best Multidisciplinary Initiative'.

## Velindre University NHS Trust

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020, the Trust has taken steps to reinforce and enhance existing Health and Wellbeing offerings. The main aim of this is to create an environment that proactively ensures that all staff, whether working on Trust sites, working from home, shielding staff, with and without Trust network access, were aware of and had access to wellbeing information and support available.

<p><b>Self care &amp; supporting each other</b></p> <p>A range of advice, guidance and resources that can help support you in looking after yourself and your colleagues during these times. This includes resources available on-site and online.</p>		<p><b>Looking after your health</b></p> <p>Resources and advice regarding a range of health matters, including sleep, nutrition, coping mechanisms, alcohol, working from home, and much more.</p>	
<p><b>Manager support</b></p> <p>Support for those managing others through these challenging times. This includes details of the EAP Manager Assist, tips to help protect the team, and a range of additional information.</p>		<p><b>Psychology team &amp; psychology services</b></p> <p>Meet the Psychology Team and discover what support services are available.</p>	
<p><b>Employee assistance programme (EAP)</b></p> <p>An overview of what is available via the EAP and details on how to contact and access the resources.</p>		<p><b>Financial wellbeing</b></p> <p>An overview of what is available via the Trust's Financial Wellbeing Scheme, supported by Heyber.</p>	
<p><b>Understanding the COVID-19 phases</b></p> <p>Understanding our responses as we go through the prepare, active and recovery phases of the pandemic.</p>		<p><b>Support available for NHS staff</b></p> <p>Details and links to external National Support Interventions available to all NHS staff, including helplines and additional resources.</p>	
<p><b>Official guidance from Government &amp; Professional bodies</b></p> <p>Details and links to Government and Professional Bodies COVID19 Guidance and Updates.</p>			

### Wellbeing Developments during COVID-19 include:

- From the start of the pandemic, the Trust developed a daily communications newsletter to all staff from the Executive Management Board, containing latest guidance, key information and wellbeing updates and links.
- The Trust has utilised a universal text messaging service to ensure staff receive important COVID updates and links to wellbeing information.
- The Executive Management Team have established online Q&A sessions to address concerns of staff.
- Introduction of a COVID-19 Workforce Helpline, available Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm.
- Staff networks continue throughout the pandemic, providing a safe space for staff from minority groups to discuss the impact of the pandemic, raise concerns and provide feedback. Networks include LGBT+ Network, BAME Network, Disability Network, Menopause Café, and a newly developed Shielding Network to support staff who are, or have been, shielding. Lessons Learned Surveys took place between July and October.
- Creation of a Health and Wellbeing Resources internet area for all staff that can be accessed remotely, enabling wider access to self-help resources and toolkits and additional support.
- Utilisation of the Maggie's Centre at the Cancer Centre site, providing a relaxation and recharge area for staff.
- Provision of psychology support at the Maggie's Centre provided by Velindre Psychology Team.
- Drop-in sessions for managers to support and advise effective wellbeing management.
- Introduction of COVID-19 Risk Assessments and guidance for managers.
- Thank you card for staff including links to wellbeing services.
- Letter to staff including wellbeing leaflet and signposting information.

## Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

### Virtual Wellbeing Sessions

The Wellbeing Team has introduced weekly wellbeing sessions held virtually through Microsoft Teams. A variety of topics and support have been offered including: Returning to work after shielding; General wellbeing drop-in sessions; Managing anxiety; Sleep; Understanding TRiM (Trauma incident peer support service); and Mental Health.

### COVID-19: Have Your Say – Colleague Survey

The COVID-19: Have Your Say – Colleague Survey was developed in partnership as a vehicle to obtain valuable insight into how the workforce was feeling as a result of COVID-19. This was circulated on 1st June 2020 to all WAST Colleagues (and those appointed following the Call to Arms) and results presented on 6<sup>th</sup> July using the platform of WAST Live (an executive-chaired briefing event held weekly during the first wave) to reach out to as many colleagues as possible. A subsequent action plan has been developed and implemented.

### WAST Health & Wellbeing Strategy, 2020-2024

WASTs Health & Wellbeing Strategy foresees the longer-term impact of COVID-19, outlining key areas that have emerged during the pandemic for the Trust to consider in relation to future ways of working and the need to adapt. These include working from home, PPE, long Covid, in addition to loss and moral injury.

### Flexible Wellbeing resources

WASTs 999 and 111 call centre colleagues have requested additional wellbeing support and WAST are providing face to face sessions for staff to take time out during their shifts. WAST have also rolled out Living Life to the Full workshops in the new year. WASTs road crews have accessed support in different ways, using the virtual wellbeing drop ins and support has been provided at stations that have experienced loss and at hospitals where there have been significant handover delays. There are also plans to introduce therapy dogs to the call centre sites once Covid restrictions permit. During the height of the first wave WAST staff who were shielding were called by the wellbeing team to ensure they were aware of and able to access welfare support. WASTs mental health portal [www.wastkeptalking.co.uk](http://www.wastkeptalking.co.uk) was also updated to include COVID-19 information.

### Temporary Redeployment

Colleagues who are unable to continue in their substantive role due to Covid, including risk and long Covid, have been able to work in other roles such as making welfare calls, distributing PPE and using alternative skills such as counselling to support their colleagues.

## NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

During 2020, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) expanded the health and wellbeing provision for staff through a number of avenues. The recruitment of an Organisational Development Facilitator for Culture and Well-being to work alongside the Mental Health Wellbeing Advisor has ensured staff are getting access to new resources and support mechanisms.

### Communication and engagement

A range of health and wellbeing resources are made available online and distributed through NWSSP newsletters. These resources are also promoted through Health and Well-being Champions and in the Managing Director's weekly email. NWSSP hosts a Virtual Coffee Morning to give staff an opportunity to hear about support for staff. Staff are also encouraged to post messages of gratitude and kindness on a digital notice board which is shared with all staff on the intranet and across numerous sites throughout Wales.

### Champions and Support Groups

**Health and Well-being Champions** – NWSSP has increased the number of Health and Well-being Champions over the last year. These champions sit on the NWSSP Health and Well-being Partnership Group and input into the strategic direction of health and well-being.

**Peer Support Group** – a network of listeners such as coaches, mediators, and staff-side representatives provide access to a confidential listening service. This is a safe space for members of staff to talk through concerns, worries or frustrations.

**Mental Health First Aiders** – the organisation has now increased the numbers of trained Mental Health First Aiders to provide support and signpost services to those with mental health concerns. Support is also provided to all Mental Health First Aiders themselves through the NWSSP Mental Health First Aid Network, led by the Mental Health Well-being Advisor.

**Mental Health Support Group** – a new mental health support group provides a safe space for those who come together to talk about their own mental health concerns in the company of others. A confidential online space also helps people to stay in touch and support each other.

**Time to Change Employee Champions** – following NWSSP signing the Time to Change pledge, Time to Change Employee Champions have now been trained to help remove the stigma of mental health.

### Online Learning

NWSSP has invested in Mind's Managing Mental Health at Work online training course to support all managers in understanding mental health problems and to learn how to support others as well as look after their own mental health. NWSSP also promotes the Zero Suicide Alliance Suicide Awareness Training.

## How the arts and being creative is supporting NHS staff wellbeing

For over three years the Welsh NHS Confederation and the Arts Council of Wales have been working in partnership to develop joint areas of work and to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to people’s health and wellbeing, including the mental health and wellbeing of artists and the NHS Wales workforce.

### Arts and health

All seven Health Boards in Wales have received funding support from the Arts Council of Wales to employ Arts and Health Coordinators. Acting as a bridge to connect the NHS with artists and arts organisations, the Arts & Health coordinator’s role is to find ways in which creative activities can help contribute to health priorities including boosting wellbeing among patients, staff and communities.



The Arts Council of Wales is also working closely with HEIW, NHS Workforce and Organisational Development Directors and Health and Wellbeing Leads to develop an online suite of creative resources to support NHS staff’s wellbeing through the arts. Development of the online platform (described as a **Cultural Cwtch**) is currently underway and both the design and content will be shaped through consultation and input from healthcare staff. Plans for the Cultural Cwtch include:

- **An Active Arts zone** – a menu of fun, bite-size, creative activities to enjoy. Led by professional artists, there’ll be a wide choice of activities designed to help lift spirits, de-stress and generally switch off from work. Ranging from photography and film-making to painting, craft, textiles and jewellery design, the aim is to appeal and cater for a wide range of interests. Whether you give drumming a go or fancy mastering the salsa; whether you opt for improving your singing, learn to play a new instrument, try your hand at acting, circus skills, writing a poem, novel or TV soap, the one thing you should expect is a high quality artistic experience with all activities led by professional artists.
- **A Curated Content zone** – an ‘on-demand’ digest and artist’s short-cut to some of the best shows, concerts, performances, films and playlists to enjoy from Wales and internationally, aimed to stimulate and soothe as well as provide enjoyment, relaxation and a distraction from work pressures.
- **Community Gallery space** - A space where NHS staff can post and share their own creative work; collaborate on joint arts projects across Wales and connect with artists and arts organisations.

The **Cultural Cwtch** will be developed and piloted throughout the Spring and plans to be available from this Summer.

### **How can the Welsh NHS Confederation help you?**

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body which represents all the organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards, the three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). We are part of the NHS Confederation and host NHS Wales Employers.

If you would like more information on this briefing, please contact Nesta Lloyd – Jones, [Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org](mailto:Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org)

You can visit our website at [www.welshconfed.org](http://www.welshconfed.org) or follow us on Twitter  [@WelshConfed](https://twitter.com/WelshConfed)