



Welsh NHS Confederation
Confederasiwn GIG Cymru

Briefing

Bringing care closer to home

This briefing highlights examples of initiatives taking place across the NHS in Wales to provide support and services in the community, through both treatment and prevention.

November 2022

Introduction

Health and care services continue to grapple with unprecedented pressures across the system while preparing for a difficult winter. With a likely early and more severe flu season, increase in COVID-19 cases and high levels of demand across health and social care services, it's no secret that it's expected to be the most challenging winter in decades. As the service tries to cope with this demand, organisations are looking at how health and wellbeing can be supported outside of NHS settings and to bring services closer to people's homes.

Many NHS organisations have been working in partnership to deliver initiatives which help people stay well: Health Education and Improvement Wales and Natural Resources Wales are working together to promote green social prescribing among trainee GPs; Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is using its creative partnership with Welsh National Opera to provide rehabilitation support to those with long COVID; and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is working with local schools, providing support to children with stammers to help give them the confidence to communicate effectively.

Services are also being made more accessible, for example Public Health Wales NHS Trust has opened a high street multi-screening service in Mountain Ash and Swansea Bay University Health Board has launched a new community clinic to help faster diagnosis of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

As the NHS prepares for a tough winter, initiatives designed to prevent illness and alleviate future demand will help keep people well and create a stronger, healthier population.

Online map launched to support wellbeing

- A new online map has been launched to help people in Newport find ways to improve their wellbeing
- The free resource helps people find activities to boost their mental and physical wellbeing

YourNewport is an exciting free online tool that connects people to resources that can help their mental and physical wellbeing in their local area. This is the first of the online maps to launch across Gwent. With everything from clubs and activities to groups and organisations, the free map can be used to find activities which will enhance people's health and wellbeing.

The YourNewport online map gathers all available local wellbeing activities; help and advice on how to get more involved in all the great things taking place across the city; and information on local support services in areas such as mental health, housing, and financial support.

The online map is available in 103 different languages to ensure it is accessible to all members of the community.

Pioneering Hepatitis C project helps more vulnerable people get tested and treated

- Almost 100 people have been successfully treated since the project was launched in 2019
- It is expected to deliver significant savings, with cost of early treatment lower than treating longer-term complications

An award-winning outreach project, which has helped dozens of the most vulnerable people in North Wales get treated for Hepatitis C, has been extended and rolled out in Bangor. The team behind the health board's Rapid Test and Treat programme say their approach has already helped marginalised communities in Wrexham and Rhyl get faster access to potentially life-saving medicines.

Their pioneering new approach – the first of its kind in Wales – has made getting tested easier and faster for homeless and other disadvantaged people.

The project brings together members of the pharmacy, point-of-care testing, gastroenterology, hepatology, substance misuse and harm reduction teams.

Rapid Test and Treat is offered directly to homeless people and other vulnerable groups in the community, alongside advice and support for common mental health conditions, substance misuse, and issues with housing and benefits.

Point-of-care testing is followed by urgent access to medication, coupled with physical and psychological support in around two weeks.

Health board joins forces with Welsh National Opera to support recovery from long COVID

- Patients are reporting an improvement in symptoms after the six-week online course
- 31 people took part in four separate courses between November 2021 and February 2022, with 94 per cent reporting that the breathing techniques were effective

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has been working in conjunction with the Welsh National Opera (WNO) to help patients with long COVID symptoms recover through song.

The use of song can be an effective means of stress management and a positive way to bring about rehabilitation. During the online sessions, WNO vocal specialists teach breathing and diaphragmatic techniques to help with breathlessness, anxiety and other long-term effects of the virus.

The health board's Arts for Health and Wellbeing Programme has been supporting the WNO and has a long-term relationship with the organisation.

The pilot programme is being offered through Cardiff and Vale, Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Boards and the outcomes of patients who have completed the course have been positive.

Speech and language team work with schools to support pupils with a stammer difficulty

- Health board team aims to empower children with a stammer to communicate confidently
- Pupils receiving therapy have felt able to present to whole-school assemblies

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the mental health and wellbeing of students who have previously struggled with speech and language difficulties, particularly those with a stammer.

The health board's speech and language team has worked with five primary schools to support students with a stammer. The ethos of the service is to make pupils, their teachers and carers realise that pupils who stammer can be confident, competent communicators.

Over four speech and language therapy sessions, each student received clinic and online-based sessions, as well as one-to-one support. Some attended group sessions to develop their understanding of stammering and communicative confidence. Afterwards, all pupils presented to their class on 'Helping Pupils who Stammer'.

One of the pupils who received speech therapy went on to present to the full school assembly via MS Teams, which inspired another student to do a joint presentation at his school, and another to present through the medium of Welsh.

DHCW system used in bowel screening expansion

- 172,000 more people in Wales will receive kits that test for early stages of bowel cancer
- The Bowel Screening Information Management System is being used to support whole screening process

The Bowel Screening Information Management System (BSIMS), developed and supported by Digital Health and Care Wales, is being used in the expansion of the bowel screening programme to people aged 55, 56 and 57.

The BSIMS is a secure web application that supports the whole screening process by selecting people from the Welsh population for screening.

From October 2022, people aged 55, 56 and 57 will start to be invited for screening, as part of the expansion of the programme. The programme will be rolled out to the newly eligible age group gradually over the next 12 months.

Evidence shows that screening people at a younger age enables more bowel cancers to be picked up at an earlier stage, when treatment is likely to be more effective and survival chances are improved.

Trainee GPs encouraged to prescribe a bigger dose of nature

- Green social prescribing can help people experiencing a range of issues and alleviate pressure on health and care services
- Trainee GPs reported sessions made them reflect on using social prescribing for issues such as inactivity and loneliness

Natural Resources Wales has been working with Health Education and Improvement Wales to deliver a pilot training session on the value of nature to the GP Training Programme Directors in Wales. This session was piloted with trainee GPs at the Nevil Hall Postgraduate Centre in Abergavenny, as part of their curriculum.

Trainee GPs were taken outdoors to experience nature-based activities as well as discussing the evidence about how nature supports health and wellbeing and how that can improve patient care.

People are often more active outdoors, which can guard against obesity and type 2 diabetes. Daylight increases vitamin D intake, which regulates mood and prevents bone problems. The immune system also benefits from exposure to microbes found in soil, with studies showing a reduced rate of asthma in children exposed to 'farm-like' bacteria. For people living with dementia, being outside engages the senses, sparks memories, and lifts mood, which may slow symptoms.

The organisations will continue to work together to explore ways to include the positive impact of the natural environment on health and wellbeing in the trainee GP curriculum in Wales.

Seamless wrap-around services provided within a short space of time to Ukrainian families in Ceredigion

- 72 Ukrainian families supported and given unique and bespoke wrap-around services
- Partnership working allowed for the best support and reflected Wales' ambition to be a Nation of Sanctuary

Hywel Dda University Health Board has formed part of a multiagency delivery group to provide wrap-around services for those fleeing war in Ukraine. Following the increase in refugees, the Urdd Gobaith Cymru Gwersyll at Llangrannog was selected and quickly set up as the first Welcome Centre of its kind.

The multiagency delivery group consisted of Welsh Government, Ceredigion County Council, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Cytun, Public Health Wales NHS Trust, Dyfed-Powys Police, the Department of Work and Pensions and others.

The health board, alongside Public Health Wales, carried out health screening on all new arrivals and arranged GP allocation for the refugees. They also provided drop-in health advice sessions with a translator.

Launch of online mental health support for children and young people

- SilverCloud online therapy service has helped over 30,000 people in Wales since its launch in September 2020
- Thousands more children and young people will be enabled to access the support they need

Young people and their families in Wales can now access free online mental health therapy through the NHS without needing to be referred by a GP. Following a successful pilot in Powys, SilverCloud online therapy has made available a suite of new support programmes to help young people manage their mental health and wellbeing.

Parents and carers can sign up for a free 12-week online therapy programme to help children and young people aged 4-18 with mild to moderate anxiety. Teens aged 16-18 can also sign themselves up, without needing adult consent, for support with anxiety or low mood via their mobile, tablet or laptop.

The roll out of the service to young people and their families across Wales aims to meet the increase in demand for children's mental health services by providing early access to support for those who need it.

SilverCloud programmes are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), an evidence-based therapy that works by encouraging young people to challenge the way they think and behave to become better equipped to deal with life's challenges. Each 12-week programme features tools and activities to help young people build skills to manage their anxiety or low mood.

Public Health Wales opens first high street screening centre

- Dedicated screening centre is the first multi-screening service to be located on a high street
- Just under 8,000 people will be invited to screening at the centre in its first year

Public Health Wales has opened the first screening centre of its kind on a high street in Wales. The dedicated screening centre is part of a brand new approach to help boost accessibility and uptake of screening.

Based in Mountain Ash, the centre is the result of a person-centred partnership approach supported by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and has been designed with public accessibility as a priority.

Public Health Wales hopes this new model can be a blueprint for the future of health screening in Wales. It brings together services for three national programmes: diabetic eye, abdominal aortic aneurysm and newborn hearing screening.

By taking screening onto the high street, the aim is to make it easier for people to attend appointments. With easy transport links nearby, the centre also offers more flexible appointments, allowing people to attend at a wider range of times outside the usual 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

The centre will provide increased screening capacity to the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr and Caerphilly.

Clinic cuts wait times for diagnosis and prevents future hospital admissions

- Since November 2021, the clinic has seen 767 people and identified 245 new COPD patients
- Without diagnosis, 50 per cent of those would have ended up in hospital beds

A new community clinic is helping to diagnose people with lung conditions quickly and prevent future hospital admissions. The clinic determines whether they have a lung condition by using a spirometry device, which is the only way to accurately diagnose chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The spirometry clinic was initially trialled in GP practices within the Penclawdd and Gowerton areas. Now, all GP practices across Swansea Bay can refer anyone with suspected COPD to the clinic for diagnostic testing.

This has proven extremely successful by ensuring quality, timely and effective care for people who need this investigation. The clinic has provided people with quicker access to a spirometry test and allowed them to be diagnosed and treated closer to home, rather than in hospital.

It was decided to launch the clinic on weekends, as more rooms at the surgery would be available, meaning more patients could be seen while adhering to infection prevention and control measures.

New service launched to identify and manage side effects for immunotherapy patients

- New service to improve patient safety by quickly identifying adverse immunotherapy side effects
- The service supports early intervention and resolves side effects sooner

Velindre Cancer Centre received Welsh Government funding to create an Immunotherapy Toxicity Service in October 2021. The service is part of a project that aims to develop same-day cancer services to keep patients who are experiencing complications out of emergency departments.

The new Immunotherapy Toxicity Service will provide early detection of immune-related adverse events, also known as ‘toxicities’, and support early intervention to allow these side effects to be managed promptly and resolved sooner.

Recent estimates suggest there could be a 240 per cent increase in immunotherapy treatments over the next five years, however they can sometimes cause adverse events. Typically, only 10 per cent of patients receiving single-agent immunotherapy will experience significant side effects.

The service will be embedded in the existing triage support line and enhanced emergency care to ensure 24/7 care in South East Wales. As part of the service, dedicated ambulatory pathways have been developed to reduce pressure on acute care services across the region.

Life-saving cardiac responder app is back

- Several thousand responders in Wales are already signed up to the app and now the Trust is inviting more
- The Welsh Ambulance Service responds to over 6,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Wales every year

The Welsh Ambulance Service has partnered with a life-saving app that lets first aiders know when there is a cardiac arrest in their area.

The GoodSAM app uses GPS technology to alert trained first responders registered on the app to a nearby cardiac arrest. If the responder is available, they can accept the alert via the app and make their way to the patient to begin CPR prior to the arrival of an ambulance.

Use of the app was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the partnership with GoodSAM has since been relaunched to allow more responders to come forward.

The Welsh Ambulance Service continues to work in partnership with Welsh Government and third sector partners to strive to deliver the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan in Wales.

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.

Ty Phoenix
8 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

029 2034 9850
www.welshconfed.org
@WelshConfed

If you require this publication in an alternative format, please email info@welshnhsconfed.org

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