



Cross-sector partnership working to support the response to COVID-19 in Wales

THE WELSH NHS CONFEDERATION
CONFFEDERASIWN GIG CYMRU 

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has meant that the health and social care system across Wales is facing its biggest challenge for generations. Staff are working right across the system, from intensive care units (ICUs), GP practices, ambulance services, mental health support services and social care services, to meet the needs of the people of Wales in an increasingly challenging and stressful environment. Partnership working and cross sector collaboration are no longer aspirational goals - they are a necessity if the NHS is to continue to rise to the challenge of providing care and support at this challenging time.

Health and social care organisations have been working across the public, private and voluntary sectors to transform services since the start of the pandemic. From continuing to provide services under current restrictions which support people to stay at home, to working with the private sector to increase bed capacity across the system so that patients with the greatest need can be treated in acute settings, the transformations that have taken place are a demonstration of an enormous national, cross-sector and compassionate response to the challenges that face the population of Wales.

Voluntary organisations, community groups and private sector companies alike have responded admirably to the Welsh Government's plea for greater collaboration, not least in the rapid manufacturing and deployment of vital personal protective equipment (PPE) for health and care staff which has meant Wales has had enough PPE. Elsewhere, volunteer groups have come together to reconnect older people who may be experiencing feelings of loneliness and social isolation. A Welsh-based pharmaceutical company is mass producing antibody tests for the whole of the UK, and private healthcare organisations have treated NHS patients with urgent cancer needs to allow the NHS to focus on Coronavirus patients.

This briefing is the third in a series of publications that aims to showcase just some of the ways that NHS organisations in Wales are working with charities, private enterprise, volunteers, community groups and others to deliver and transform key services to respond to COVID-19. It is hoped that some of the work highlighted here will inspire us to think about what we can do to help as well as share learning across the health and care sectors.

Hospice UK: The Paul Sartori Foundation

Partnership working to deliver person-centred services at end of life

Hospice services have been supporting NHS colleagues to enable people to be transferred home at the end of life. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Paul Sartori Foundation worked collaboratively with Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) to support rapid discharge from hospital to home, with double the number of people supported compared to previous years.



The Paul Sartori Foundation Care were contacted by a distressed relative who reported that they were trying to enable their relative to get home to Pembrokeshire for her final days. Due to the pandemic, the family had been unable to visit the patient in hospital in Llanelli. The family had been made aware that the patient was in their anticipated final weeks. Having not seen her for a few weeks, there was an anxiety to get her home as soon as possible.

The hospice contacted the ward and offered support with equipment and day and night respite care. They established that the patient was medically well enough to make the journey home. A family member was met at the person's home by one of the hospice nurses to assess what home support the person would need. At the same time, the hospice equipment team delivered a hospital bed, table and commode and set these up in the house in anticipation of the person's return home.

Later that day, after the family members travelled to collect her, additional care was established for the person through the Intermediate Care Hub. The Paul Sartori Foundation were able to inform the local District nurse team about the patient and what support they would need at home with pressure care and medication. 4 nights' respite care was provided by the hospice, meeting all nursing needs and offering symptom control, meaning the Out-of-Hours services did not need to attend. The person passed away peacefully at home with her family close by.

The Rainbow Centre

Supporting vulnerable people in South Wrexham

The Rainbow Centre, which serves the communities of Wrexham and North Shropshire by providing community services, social prescribing projects and community outreach services, has joined forces with nine local Community Councils across South Wrexham to co-ordinate a community response to help support vulnerable people during COVID-19.



The Rainbow Centre manages a team of Community Agents who operate from a wellbeing hub and work across South Wrexham. They are trained to offer advice and support on a range of issues. Linking in with local volunteers has enabled Community Agents to focus on assessing people's needs and arranging appropriate support (including arranging home care, living aids, meals and nutrition, wellbeing support and benefit advice). In addition, the Centre has been signposting people in need of support to local volunteers who can provide direct assistance with shopping, prescriptions, dog walking and other day-to-day tasks.

On 16th March, the Centre joined forces with Overton Community Council to agree an approach which could be replicated swiftly across the Community Council areas and support the COVID-19 response. Marchwiell and Bangor on Dee were already offering local level support, so the Centre was keen to join with them whilst supporting more Community Councils to join the response.

The shared response ensures residents have access to the support, advice, and practical help they need, whilst ensuring vulnerable people and those volunteering are protected and stay safe.



Life Sciences Hub Wales

Harnessing the power of Welsh industry is crucial to combatting COVID-19

Businesses from across Wales have been adapting and innovating at an unprecedented scale and pace to combat the spread of COVID-19 and help treat those affected by the virus. From restructuring operations and re-engineering production lines to leveraging



supply chains overnight, these businesses have worked tirelessly to offer NHS Wales the equipment and services it urgently needs. However, their successes are not solely a case of quick reactions by individuals to meet new demands. Collaborations between industry and NHS Wales have been vital in making them possible.

Making collaborations possible

Life Sciences Hub Wales (LSHW) has been appointed by Welsh Government to manage all industry enquiries to support NHS Wales during this crucial time.

The role of the Hub is to act as a conduit between industry and the health service, encouraging and assisting organisations to come forward with offers of support. With direct links to both industry and the health and social care sectors, Life Sciences Hub Wales understands the needs of frontline services as well as the role businesses can play in combatting COVID-19.

LSHW is working closely with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) and the National Procurement Service - organisations responsible for the procurement of key products - to process all initial enquiries and undertake due diligence to ensure the most relevant and appropriate companies are approached. Further information can be found on LSHW [website](#).

Spire Healthcare

Taking on urgent NHS treatment to relieve pressure from COVID-19

A landmark agreement between Cardiff and Vale UHB and Spire Healthcare is enabling patients with cancer and other urgent conditions to receive treatment at Spire Cardiff, allowing the Health Board's main sites to focus on caring for people with COVID-19.

The agreement began at the start of the pandemic, and Spire Cardiff has passed the milestone of treating its 1,000th NHS patient. The Health Board's patients at Spire Cardiff are being treated predominantly for cancer or other time-critical health conditions. People with gynecological, breast, neurological, colorectal, gastroenterological, urological and hematological cancers received surgery within a safe, COVID-free environment at Spire Cardiff or have been seen in outpatients' department.

Spire Cardiff Hospital also loaned three ventilators to the Royal Glamorgan Hospital in Bridgend at the start of the pandemic, when there was considerable uncertainty around what the future demand for ventilators would be.

The partnership between Spire Healthcare and the UHB has been possible under a national agreement, which Spire, alongside the whole of the independent sector, signed to make its staff, equipment and facilities available to NHS Wales.



BCB International

Developer of military protective equipment returns to the frontline to produce alcohol hand sanitiser

A Welsh manufacturer that can trace its life-saving work to the trenches of the Crimean war is now working to ensure that NHS Wales has the supplies it needs in the battle against COVID-19.



For over 160 years, BCB International has built up knowledge and expertise in developing life-saving and protective equipment for British defence personnel, mariners and adventure seekers operating beyond the comfort zone.

Today, the company has switched productions at its Llanelli-based site, which would normally produce its patented solidified bio-ethanol fuel products, to the creation of high strength alcohol hand sanitiser.

In a nod to BCB's founding father, Dr Brown's Hand Sanitiser is named after Dr John Collis Browne, who originally created cough medicine that brought relief to British soldiers suffering in the trenches of the Crimean war.

In addition to donating hand sanitiser and PPE equipment to emergency responders and community groups, BCB International has supplied NHS Wales with over 250,000 litres of hand sanitiser since it first placed an offer to supply Wales' health services via Life Sciences Hub Wales.

As well as sanitiser products, the company has submitted offers to supply NHS Wales with additional PPE equipment such as gowns, gloves, masks and shields. The manufacturer has also created portable carry packs containing protective equipment that can be carried by first responders, police and those working to serve communities across Wales.

The Conwy Community Therapy Team

Changed work patterns to support COVID-19 rehabilitation at Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

Community therapists working in Conwy have changed their working pattern to provide more cover for rehabilitation of patients recovering from COVID-19. Working as part of the area's Community Resource Teams, a group of Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Therapy Technical Instructors are now working seven days a week to support people in their own homes.

The Conwy Community Therapy Team can now help more people return from hospital sooner and where appropriate support people to stay in their own homes rather than be admitted to hospital. Their work includes: the provision of equipment or advice required to support people to maintain independence and safety at home; advice around falls; provision of exercise programmes and rehabilitation within people's own homes; and establishing close links with other services such as District Nurse teams, social services and GP practices.

Alongside their work to help get people back on their feet after being poorly from COVID-19, the team are also looking at new, innovative ways of working. Gwawr Job-Davies, Interim Deputy Head of Physiotherapy in the Central Area, said: *"We are working on rehab pathways and have already developed new ways of providing services given the current restrictions in place. As well as visiting people in their own homes, we're offering telephone and video consultations which we haven't done before. We're doing all we can to help people stay well and independent at home."*

The team is one of many across North Wales changing the way they are working to meet the demands of COVID-19. At Wrexham Maelor Hospital, a round-the-clock shift pattern is in place for physiotherapists to provide proning support to patients. Proning is a treatment to help support people with breathing difficulties, lying a patient on their front to improve the amount of oxygen in the blood stream. All three main hospital sites now have increased therapist coverage throughout the week at their Emergency Departments, and community Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy teams in Gwynedd and Anglesey have already been working to the seven-day service model.



The Bridgend Carers Centre

Supporting the unpaid carers workforce in Bridgend

The Bridgend Carers Centre (BCC) was set-up back in 1999 and it became a registered charity in 2008. There are an estimated 18,000 unpaid carers in Bridgend. Most often, this involves people caring for family members, and it can range from everything including young people caring for siblings with physical disabilities, parents looking after children with mental disabilities, and elderly people caring for their partner.

In response to the need to make a positive difference to carers' lives, the Centre was created to provide information, advice and support to improve the wellbeing of carers within the county. As well as practical advice, the Centre offers carers various activities to help them have fun and unwind, such as a weekly meet-up at the community café and regular trips and activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the centre was forced to close on 17th March. Although unable to continue with its one-to-one support, a holistic carer support service had never been more important. After all, the Centre had found a widespread rise in cases of carers feeling isolated and anxious about how to carry out tasks such as food shopping whereby they may contract the virus and expose it to the vulnerable person in their home.

The centre has continued to provide services remotely, with telephone support lines for areas such as counselling, legal advice and information on welfare benefits. Through this telephone line, carers can continue to have access to a range of experts, including support workers and benefits advisors, when they need advice or just an informal conversation over concerns. The Voluntary Services Emergency Fund has provided some financial support to the Centre to continue delivering its services.



Check Out Our New Wellbeing Section!

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Welcome to Bridgend Carers Centre

Search



The Welsh Drinks Cluster

Welsh distillers answer the call to collaborate to fight Coronavirus

Welsh gin distilleries have produced and given away more than 200,000 bottles of hand sanitiser to frontline services, essential workers and community care providers since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A partnership with the Welsh Drinks Cluster, which represents Wales' alcohol and soft drinks producers, is enabling the Life Sciences Hub to aid distillers across the country to switch production in response to the national call-out for hand sanitiser.

Distilleries have joined forces with businesses and organisations from a range of industry sectors to tackle COVID-19 in Wales. As a result, some have accessed support from antimicrobial specialists at Hybrisan to ensure products meet necessary standards, Swansea University has assisted in sourcing essential materials, and Welsh Government support has enabled businesses across Wales to provide logistical support to ensure materials and products can be transported to where they are needed most.

Collaboration in this area has already seen hand sanitiser delivered to hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, Royal Air Force personnel, police forces, community groups and the Royal Mail.



Age Cymru's 'Friend in Need' Service

Volunteering to connect with Wales' older people during COVID-19

Age Cymru has launched the 'Friend in Need' service to help tackle loneliness and isolation amongst the over 70s as a result of social distancing, self-isolation and shielding.

Older people will be able to connect with a trained and vetted Age Cymru volunteer for a free weekly friendship call. Funded by the Welsh Government, and with the support of the WLGA and Volunteering Wales, the service was launched during Volunteers' Week. Volunteers are **encouraged to sign up and register** their interest in being part of the new scheme.

The initiative supports friends or neighbours who are providing informal help to older people and others who are social distancing, self-isolating or shielding with activities such as shopping or collecting prescriptions. Since the start of lockdown, the charity has made more than 10,000 calls to older people who are lonely and isolated due to the lockdown and handled more than 3,000 enquiries to its advice line.

Denise, from Gwynedd, says: *"The calls from Age Cymru help to pick me up whenever I am feeling low. And when I was going through a particularly bad patch, their support and advice encouraged me to get the expert help that I needed"*.

Chief Executive of Age Cymru, Victoria Lloyd, said: *"We have had an encouraging level of early interest from older people and from volunteers, which is giving us the opportunity to test and build up the new service"*.

Potential volunteers will be interviewed by telephone, asked to submit two references and to forward a DBS check if they have one. Age Cymru will provide online training, then match the volunteer with an older person for a 30-minute weekly telephone conversation. The charity will provide ongoing support to the volunteer.



The Royal Voluntary Service

Improving the mobility and wellbeing of older patients through exercise and social connectivity

Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteers are working closely with clinical teams to improve outcomes for older patients on hospital wards. In clinical settings, they help with exercise and activity sessions, and in the community, they're supporting a prevention-based service which focusses on nutrition, physical wellbeing and social connectivity.

At St David's hospital and Llandough hospital in Cardiff and Vale UHB, volunteers are supporting patients to do chair-based exercises to build strength and mobility. Exercise sessions focus on building muscle strength in the core, arms and legs whilst replicating the day-to-day movements that older people may struggle with. Group sessions also aim to reduce anxiety and loneliness. So far, 61 volunteers have contributed 1,180 volunteer hours (the value of this, as estimated by the Kings Fund, is £12,980) supporting 158 patients over a period of 16 months.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the service implemented a contingency plan. Both aspects of the service, the on-ward service and the home/community services, have been adapted to provide a telephone befriending service. Support has also been offered to other hospitals and support organisations, such as Care and Repair. Volunteers and staff have been supporting clients with wellbeing phone calls and the offer of shopping/delivery services.

The situation is being monitored and discussions will be held with Cardiff and Vale UHB when hospital and government guidelines permit to re-establish the services as normal and enhance the pathway for the community support service, including a community 'Move it or Lose it' class.

RVS has secured funding for this work until 2021, with funding from The Peoples Postcode Lottery. It is recognised as a 'seed and scale' project which has potential for wider adoption across the UK. Updates will be published as the work progresses.



**ROYAL
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Ortho Clinical Diagnostics (Ortho)

Wales-based manufacturer to produce COVID-19 antibody tests

Ortho Clinical Diagnostics (Ortho), a global leader of in-vitro diagnostics, has announced that production of their COVID-19 antibody tests is underway at its state-of-the-art facility in Pencoed, near Bridgend in South Wales.



In early April, the Welsh Government made a national industry call out for companies to support Wales' work to combat COVID-19, to which Ortho Clinical Diagnostics responded.

A global leader in its field, Ortho has developed a manufacturing base for serological testing in Wales over the past 40 years. Today, the company employs over 500 people at their site in Pencoed and produces millions of tests each week for a wide range of disease states and medical conditions for distribution globally.

Working in partnership with Public Health Wales NHS Trust, Ortho will provide their COVID-19 assays that are produced in the Pencoed manufacturing facility to support testing across Wales. The tests detect antibodies that can be used to identify an immune response confirming a previous and recent COVID-19 infection and may be critical in back-to-work strategies.

Paul Hackworth, Ortho Managing Director UK, said: *"We are delighted to be working with Public Health Wales and Welsh Government to play our part in the overall testing strategy for Wales. We were one of the first in-vitro diagnostics providers to step up to this unique challenge and are proud that our COVID-19 antibody tests will provide a flexible, reliable solution for the Welsh Government to maximise the effectiveness of their approach."*

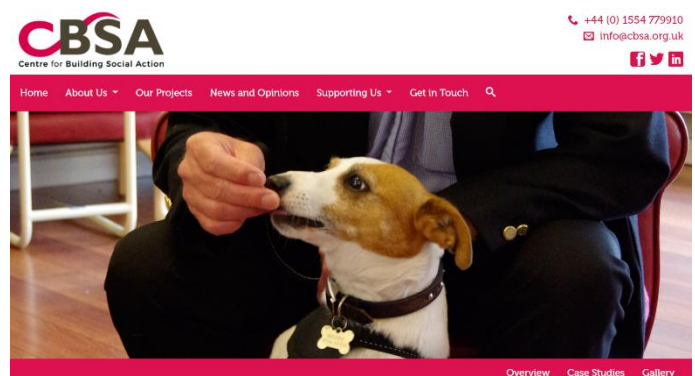
The Centre for Building Social Action

The Best Friends project

The aim of the Best Friend Project is to improve intergenerational understanding; improve levels of mental health at an individual level; and improve the levels of volunteering amongst disadvantaged young people who would not normally consider doing so. The mechanism for achieving this is through a programme of visits to local care homes, where older and younger volunteers and their dogs can meet and engage with older residents. In turn, residents within the care homes can enjoy meeting new people. A reduction in isolation and loneliness is supported amongst volunteers and beneficiaries alike. Trained and assessed doggie volunteers act as a bridge between the ages.

There is a long history of animal-assisted programmes being implemented to support individuals of all ages to improve levels of mental health. The benefits are achieved through interaction with animals, whether it is related to touching and providing them with treats, or simply by observing the animal and its relationship with its owner. These potential benefits stem from the fact that contact with animals is a potent supportive source for individuals due to the acceptance and positive response of the animals. Additionally, the very act of volunteering is linked to increased self-esteem and confidence which in turn leads to improved mental wellbeing.

So far, the key beneficial outcome from the project has been the way in which volunteers have bonded as a group, helping each other during visits and providing peer-to-peer emotional support. For example, two young volunteers, both of whom live with social anxiety, became close friends. Though they lived some distance from each other, they formed a long-distance friendship and supported each other via social media. Over time and through mutual support, both young women overcame their anxiety not only to start, but also stay in, college. A second example is the healing of a family bond when two sisters joined the project and healed a long-standing rift through a shared love of animals.



The Stephens and George Centenary Charitable Trust

Investing in the education and wellbeing of young people in Merthyr Tydfil

The Stephens and George Centenary Charitable Trust, established by one of the oldest businesses in Wales, The Stephen and George Print Group, was launched with the purpose of investing in the education of young people in response to low literacy levels in the area.

When the organisation moved into its new building, the Dowlais Community Centre, in 2016, its goal was to make the Trust more sustainable by transforming the new space into a fully-fledged community hub that would engage members of the local community from all ages. Opening its doors to a range of local services, the building is now home to over fifty classes ranging from archery to salsa dancing to engage people in the community.

Like many volunteer and charity organisation in Wales, COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the Trust. Members of the community were no longer able to interact with their educational activities or access other on-site activities that had become an integral lifeline for the community.

Helen Hughes, Charity co-ordinator, said: *“It’s really sad - this big building became an empty vacuum. COVID-19 ripped the heart out of our community and brought with it a very dark cloud. Thankfully, this cloud is slowly disappearing as we’ve been able to put our arms around those in need and reassure them that we’ll always be there for them. This led to a sudden realisation - we needed to actively get out and about to properly support our community”*.

Over the past two months, 47 new volunteers joined the Trust, which has enabled the delivery of over 900 educational packs for young people in the area, as well as 3,500 free food parcels to families who need them most. The Trust has also made lesson services available online, which include Art Attack, history and chess.

Helen continues: “The community is noticeably a much happier and less isolated place to be. This has all been possible because of the funding we have received. As COVID-19 now slowly releases its grip on Merthyr, we can begin to look forward to getting our community centre services back up and running”.



Transcend Packaging

Caerphilly company's sustainable PPE receives global interest

A Caerphilly company has switched up production at its factory to create millions of sustainable face shields that will be used worldwide by frontline staff as well to support employees returning to the workplace.



Transcend Packaging, a sustainable packaging specialist and the first company in Europe to produce paper straws for major quick service restaurants, has converted operations at its Ystrad Mynach manufacturing base to create protective face shields. Made from reinforced paper boards and recyclable materials, the inexpensive visors are designed for single use and to be recycled. Transcend Packaging has been able to ensure their products meet all standards required for use by NHS Wales, frontline and key workers thanks to support from Life Sciences Hub Wales.

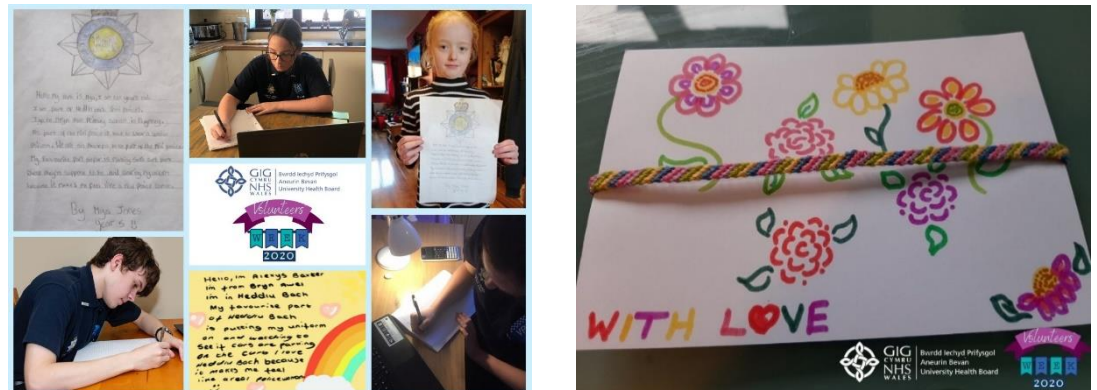
Nearly 3 million of the shields have been manufactured to date, with the company having received orders from all over the globe. So far, over 1.5 million face shields have entered directly into either NHS Wales or the UK Department of Health and Social Care agencies to support staff on the frontline. The firm is also supplying shields to councils, care homes, retailers and factories across the country. As well as supplying the products to various settings across the UK, Transcend Packaging has seen its shields distributed across Europe and is now in talks to supply Japan and the US.

The company's change in production was showcased as part of a national online event, hosted by Life Sciences Hub Wales in conjunction with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership. During the event, Transcend Packaging described how they worked with Life Sciences Hub Wales to achieve the appropriate certification in order to correctly manufacture personal protective equipment (PPE) and subsequently supply to NHS Wales.

Gwent Police

Gwent Police Cadets

Gwent Police Cadets in the Newport area have been writing letters to elderly people in hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic, in lieu of being able to visit. Similarly, young people from Newport Youth Justice Service have been sending handmade cards and friendship bracelets to care home residents, and hope to visit them once safe to do so. They have also made pamper bags for hospital staff. The programme has supported young people in making a positive contribution to the community.



The Swansea Voluntary Council Service

Supporting pharmacies in Swansea with a home delivery service

Through the Swansea Voluntary Council Service (SVCS), volunteers have been delivering prescriptions on behalf of pharmacies throughout the pandemic.

Amy Meredith-Davies, Health and Wellbeing Partnerships Manager for SVCS, said: *“We’ve worked in partnership with 4x4 Response South Wales, a volunteer force operating throughout South Wales. They have been truly amazing in delivering prescription medication along with numerous other requests that they have been dealing with during this COVID crisis, such as delivering food parcels.”*



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).

If you would like more information on this briefing, please contact our Director, Darren Hughes, Darren.Hughes@welshconfed.org

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