



**Implementing A  
*Healthier Wales*  
during the  
Winter Period**



## Introduction

This winter there has been an unprecedented demand on the NHS across the UK, and Wales is no different. The winter months are always a challenging time for health and care services with cold weather and seasonal illnesses. The pressures are apparent across the whole health and care system, in social care and GP practices, in community services as well as in our hospitals.

The enormous pressures facing the NHS, not just in winter but all year round, re-emphasise the need to focus on early interventions, preventative measures and ensure people are accessing and using health services in the most appropriate way. The aim is for people to stay happy, healthy and independent – principles which were clearly laid out in [A Healthier Wales](#), the Welsh Government's long-term plan for health and social care. The NHS in Wales is fully committed to working more closely with our partners across social care, the third sector and directly with the public.

We also need to support the public to [Choose Well](#) this winter, which must guide decision making. Choosing the right health service for people's individual needs will help reduce the pressure. Accident and Emergency departments must only be used in an emergency. The Choose Well [website](#) has a lot of information around the most appropriate services available to the public. In December 2019 the Welsh NHS Confederation developed poster to support people stay well and look after themselves.

The examples in this briefing focus on some of the person-centred projects and initiatives that our members, the seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales, are implementing to help keep people well this winter. They highlight some examples on how the NHS in Wales are collaborating with the third sector, social care services and key stakeholder.

We must drive improvement and focus on prevention and wellbeing as set out in the long-term plan in order to ensure we have a health and social care system which works for everyone in Wales. We need to learn from these projects and identify and overcome the key barriers to scaling them up. This will help relieve pressures on the system not only during the winter months, but all year round.

### **How to 'Keep Well this Winter'**

The flu season started early this year and the Health Board is already seeing people being admitted to hospital, including to Intensive Care, with serious complications from flu.

In order to minimise admissions to hospital, the NHS offers a free flu vaccine to those most at risk of serious complications if they get flu. The Health Board highlighted it's not too late for people to get their flu vaccine. The vaccine provides the best protection from flu and this year's vaccine is well matched to the strain of flu that is circulating in our communities.

The free flu vaccine is offered to everyone with a long-term health condition, such as diabetes, asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease or epilepsy. Everyone who is pregnant, is 65 years old or older or is a carer is eligible too.

The Health Board's Director of Public Health and Strategic Partnerships, Dr Sarah Aitken, recently spent the day with their local school's immunisation team as they work their way round every primary school in the area to offer all the children a free flu vaccine.

Lots of other viruses circulate during the winter as well as flu. The public can play their part in reducing the spread of viruses in winter by taking simple steps to stop the spread of harmful germs. Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (UHB) are encouraging people to use a tissue to 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' and protect other people. The Health Board also wants people to check on vulnerable neighbours.

For more information on how to 'Keep Well this Winter' please visit [www.aneurinbevanhb.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.aneurinbevanhb.wales.nhs.uk)



### **Keep your hips in shape this winter**

The Orthopaedic and Falls Prevention team at Wrexham Maelor Hospital in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB) provides people in North Wales with tips and advice on how to prevent hip fractures in elderly and vulnerable groups. More than 1,000 people have been admitted into hospital with hip fractures across North Wales within the last year. Over winter adverse weather conditions can mean the risk of people falling increases and more people needing hospital treatment.

A hip fracture is a serious injury which happens mostly in elderly and vulnerable people after a simple fall, mostly in the home environment. The team produced advice which covered;

#### **Preparing your home**

- Good lighting in your driveway, such as clearing wet and dry leaves.
- Keep your home clutter free.
- Ensure your stairs are clear of any items and have sturdy railings.
- Don't leave loose wires or cables on the floor.
- Remove rugs or any slippery items.
- Clean fluid spillage from the floor as soon as possible.
- Ensure you have non-slip bath and floor mats in your bathrooms and toilets.
- Install grab rails in the shower, bathroom and toilets.
- Good bedroom lighting during the night.

#### **Look after yourself**

- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Do gentle exercise to maintain muscle power and tone.
- Have your eyes and glasses checked regularly.
- If you have any problems with your balance see your GP.

#### **Plan your activity and attire**

- Wear well-fitting, non-slip shoes.
- Put on well-fitting and warm clothes if going outside and use a walking stick if wet and windy.
- Stay in touch with family and friends.

### **Frailty Intervention Team**

The Frailty Intervention Team (FIT) was launched in January 2020 at Cardiff and Vale UHB to improve services for frail older people. The FIT service aims to provide rapid comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA) alongside the medical review to establish any additional frailty-specific needs. The aim is to support discharge back home where possible and avoid hospital associated decompensation for those that need to stay.

These multi-disciplinary teams consist of physios, OTs, dieticians and Frailty nurse specialists, and is led by a Consultant Geriatrician. Frailty Liaison Officers and First Point of Contact officers also support the FIT team.

The FIT teams work closely with the teams in the Emergency Unit (EU) and Assessment Unit (AU) at the University Hospital of Wales and the Medical Emergency Assessment Unit (MEAU) at University Hospital Llandough to identify patients that will benefit from this service.

All patients aged 70 and over have their case notes reviewed for the presence of frailty syndromes, the presence of which lead to further review by the Frailty Intervention Team.

Frailty intervention work has already been taking place at the UHB, but the implementation of FIT will provide a dedicated multidisciplinary team and will enhance the service at UHW by extending to 7:30am – 7:30pm Mon- Fri, and provide a service between 8:00am – 4:30pm on weekends.

It has been recognised that there is a demand for a similar service at University Hospital Llandough for residents of Barry and the Vale of Glamorgan. The FIT team will build on the success of the therapist's de-conditioning work undertaken at Llandough Hospital over the past 2 winters, by providing a full CGA-trained multidisciplinary team and Consultant Geriatrician at the front door.

The purpose of FIT is to provide care closer to home, avoid unnecessary hospital admission, involve people and families in care decisions, and ensure people receive the right care, first time.

### **Cwm Taf Morgannwg and British Red Cross work together to improve patients' hospital experience**

Cwm Taf Morgannwg have worked in partnership with British Red Cross to launch a new patient service in Emergency Departments (EDs) at Royal Glamorgan and Prince Charles hospitals.

Patients will now be welcomed by a new team of British Red Cross workers to make sure people have the best hospital experience possible; from arriving at reception, during any treatment and through to their discharge.

British Red Cross staff do not attend to any patient clinical needs, but they work very closely with staff in the ED to prioritise any patients' (pastoral care) needs. That could mean sitting with patients and family members while they wait, ensuring patients are hydrated, keeping patients warm with blankets, and directing family members to loved ones.

However, the service does not end there. It also involves resettling patients in their homes once discharged from hospital. A vehicle will remain onsite to take patients home, rather than them waiting for an ambulance. The driver will ensure the patient is comfortable and resettled at home, which could include ensuring that food and heating is available, as well as making any carer arrangements.



## Health Education and Improvement Wales

### Sore throat? Now you can see your pharmacist

Patients suffering with sore throats will be able to get help and advice on their doorstep this winter from community pharmacists. The Sore Throat Test-and-Treat service training provides pharmacists with the necessary skills to offer patients a new service for treating sore throat symptoms closer to home, helping to ease the pressure on health resources during the winter months. Each year an average GP will see around 120 patients with acute pharyngitis – or a sore throat.

By the end of January 2020, 400 community pharmacists in Wales will have been trained to provide a Sore Throat Test-and-Treat service, saving thousands of patients a trip to their GP surgery. Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) has been working closely with Health Boards to offer these clinical skills training sessions across Wales.

After talking to more than 55 pharmacies and recording 3,655 consultations, HEIW has had significant positive feedback.



Now all Health Boards are looking to get involved in the expanded scheme. From next April, plans are underway to train a further 1,000 community pharmacists with the aim that eventually all 716 community pharmacies in Wales will offer the service.

The Sore Throat Test-and-Treat service is in addition to the successful Choose Pharmacy range of initiatives for patients offered by the community pharmacies. Pharmacists assess symptoms, examine the patients throat and take a simple swab test if they suspect they are suffering with a bacterial infection. The results of the test are available in minutes, and the pharmacist and patient can then discuss the best treatment to manage symptoms.

### **Hywel Dda UHB Home Support Team (Pembrokeshire)**

The Home Support Team has been set up to provide hospital level rehabilitation care at home for patients who meet certain criteria for up to a maximum of two weeks following discharge. The team will provide the opportunity for patients to leave Withybush General Hospital at an earlier point in their recovery and receive short term interventional care to reach independence and functional goals in the comfort of their own home. This service is suitable for patients where there is a very short-term reduction in function and no formal care is required, the team will enable improvement of performance in this set time. There are times where this team may support formal or other care provision to reach specific functional goals. In certain circumstances, the team may also be considered to help prevent an admission to hospital if appropriate.

#### **What the Team can offer:**

The following list is not exhaustive and offers some examples.

- Support and advice from the multi-disciplinary team for patients and carers.
- Identify goals to increase independence with functional activities following an inpatient admission to support with their discharge home. This may include goals with washing, dressing, functional mobility, meals, or any identified goals by the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT).
- Supportive discharge.
- Supportive visits to the patients' home within an acceptable time of their arrival at home.
- Continuation and promotion of exercise programme if prescribed by a physiotherapist.
- Support carers after initial discharge by helping the patient with functional tasks.

Episodes of care are time limited. The health care/intervention will comprise a maximum of two weeks with further input negotiable with the MDT if required. The Team can offer a maximum of two visits daily but if required and pre planned support may be appropriate by Community Nursing and Acute Response Team colleagues. All patients discharged into the service must be deemed medically or surgically optimised for discharge.



### **Supporting patients to return home promptly and safely from hospital**

The rural nature of Powys means that residents rely on neighbouring district general hospitals for their acute care. Even their nearest community hospital may be some distance away. An extended hospital stay can lead to patients becoming less independent, and the unfamiliarity of a hospital environment can mean patients can struggle to adapt when they return home. An Occupational Therapy led “*discharge to recover and assess*” programme in Powys is helping to tackle this and keep people well and out of hospital.

As winter 2018/19 approached, a co-design process was put in place to ensure that patients who could be supported in their homes with community support were discharged from wards, without unnecessary delay. The approach aimed to ensure assessments were completed in the right place and patients were given the time for recuperation and recovery, on-going rehabilitation or reablement and that community resources were utilised in the most effective way.

The project implemented a “Discharge to Recover and Assess” (D2RA) model in North East Powys over the winter period to ensure speedy discharge from hospital to home and to conduct assessments in the best place. The assessment included the patient and their circles of support, adult social care & reablement, Powys Teaching Health Board’s multi-disciplinary teams, GP practices and the third sector. This led to the creation of a D2RA approach working with patients to ensure that those who can be supported in their own home are discharged from the ward quickly with wraparound support if required and assessments are taking place in their own home environment following discharge.

An in-reach model was implemented, with designated Reablement Occupational Therapists working alongside the ward’s multi-disciplinary team to identify patients on rounds that were at a functional level so that they could be discharged home with community support. They carried out strength-based assessments and worked closely with patient’s families and used different agencies to support patients to ensure that they could be discharged home in a timely and supported way. Patients were then seen to at home by the Occupational Therapist to make sure the appropriate support package was in place and ensure the patient and their family had an opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have.

Building on the learning from winter 2018/19, this model is now being rolled out across all 2000 square miles of Powys.

**Public Health  
Wales NHS  
Trust**

**Making a Difference Health and Housing: A Case for Investment 2019**

Poor-quality homes are having a profound effect on the physical and mental health of the people living there and often, they end up in the care of the NHS. Poor housing (such as quality, unsuitable homes or homelessness) in Wales cost the NHS more than £95m per year in first year treatment costs alone and the cost to Welsh society is over £1bn. But funding the removal of hazards in the home offers a payback period of 6 years where immediate health savings are considered, or just over 6 months where societal savings are included.

Last year Public Health Wales released a report which highlighted the need for increased funding in housing to better people's health. The report takes a prevention focused approach to improving health and wellbeing over the winter period in Wales. The aim of the report is to help frame strategic planning for future services by describing the impact different types of weather, such as cold times in the winter, has on health and care services.

Based on international evidence on the causes of ill-health in winter, risk factors and vulnerable populations, proven methods to reduce winter related morbidity and mortality, and insights across key stakeholders, this report establishes a whole system framework of action at a national and local level based on collaboration, integration and local contexts.

The report states that more needs to be done to realise the type of population health improvement required to sustainably change the health and wellbeing outcomes of the people of Wales and pivotal to this is a truly integrated health, care and housing relationship. It is essential that housing and population health be tackled on a truly collaborative basis across public, voluntary and all public sectors. It highlights many examples of ongoing projects that are showing a real impact on improving health via housing in a collaborative way on different sections of the population such as children, the elderly and rough sleepers.

## Swansea Bay University Health Board

### Winter Homeless Food Appeal

Swansea Bay University Health Board's annual winter appeal for items of food and clothing for homeless people has once again received a magnificent response.

Run in association with homeless charity The Wallich, the appeal helps rough sleepers in the Swansea Bay area. Donations also support people who are vulnerably housed. These are former rough sleepers or homeless people who now have a roof over their head but have little or no spare cash for clothes or toiletries.

The donations come at a time of real vulnerability for those struggling to get housing or in poor housing conditions, and go a long way to helping reduce people's need to call on the NHS for care over the winter months.

The generosity of Health Board staff means the donations will last for many months to come.

Staff were asked to donate men's and women's clothes and shoes, phone chargers, toiletries, tinned food, kit bags and sleeping bags.

Staff dropped off

hundreds of bags filled with donations at Singleton, Morriston, Neath Port Talbot and Cefn Coed hospitals, along with the Health Board's headquarters in Baglan.



These were collected by volunteers with The Wallich, ready for distribution in the months ahead – donations usually last until the following September.

**Welsh  
Ambulance  
Services NHS  
Trust**

**Senior Clinical support ensuring clinical support during times of increased system pressure**

The winter period brings additional system pressures that can increase the degree of support required for patients interact with staff. Opportunities to create support networks have been investigated in order to assist clinicians during the clinical decision-making process to ensure they feel supported and empowered to make right decision.

In addition to the current support offered by Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS Cymru) in Wales, the Advanced Paramedic Practitioner Desk and Clinical Support Desk, the Trust is piloting the provision of Senior Clinical Support on a 24/7 basis to support the principle of ‘no decision in isolation’. Clinicians are encouraged to seek senior clinical support in any circumstance where they feel a ‘peer to peer’ discussion may assist with the decision-making process. Examples of when the Senior Clinical Support may be accessed are too numerous to list, however, examples of when our frontline clinicians could access this support are:

- Assistance with the Mental Capacity Act decision making process.
- Termination of Resuscitation incidents outside the normal Clinical Practice Guidelines, for example prolonged pulseless electrical activity (PEA) with limited prospect of recovery.
- Additional analgesia administration above the current Clinical Practice Guidelines.
- Sedation in context of adult cerebral irritation.

## Look after yourself this winter

These are some of the things you can do to protect yourself from ill health this winter.

Cold weather can be bad for your health. If you start to feel unwell this winter, even if it's just a cold or a cough, don't wait until it gets serious. Seek advice from your local Pharmacist.



**Keep Warm** - hot meals and drinks will help



**Stay Active** - even moderate exercise can help keep you warm



**Check local news and weather forecasts** for advice when bad weather is forecast



**Need a repeat prescription?** - contact your GP now so you don't run out of your medications over the holidays, particularly if bad weather is forecast



**Choose Well** - your local Pharmacist can give you confidential expert advice and treatment for common illnesses



**Check on elderly relatives and neighbours** - if you're worried about a relative or elderly neighbour, contact your local council or call the Age Cymru Helpline on 0800 223 444.



**Do you have cold or a cough?**

Use the NHS symptom checkers on NHS Direct Wales

### Get the Flu Jab

If you're otherwise fit and healthy, with no long-term health problems, there's usually no need to see a doctor if you're experiencing flu-like symptoms.

However, flu can be serious. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and vulnerable members of the community.

It's **free** and offered annually to people aged 65 and over, carers, or people with certain long-term conditions. Check with your Pharmacist to see if you are eligible for a free vaccination.

### Remember...



**Catch it:** always use a tissue to cough or sneeze into



**Bin it:** dispose of the tissue after use



**Kill it:** then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to kill any flu viruses



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THE WELSH NHS CONFEDERATION  
CONFFEDERASIWN GIG CYMRU

## How can the Welsh NHS Confederation help you?

Please get in touch if you want further details on anything highlighted in this briefing. Please contact **Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Assistant Director**, on [Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org](mailto:Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org)

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).

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



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