



# Partnership working across Wales to support the response to COVID-19 and resetting NHS services

## Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has meant that health and social care services across Wales are facing the biggest challenge for generations. Staff are working 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.

In this briefing, the fourth in this series, we highlight the breadth of work NHS organisations have been doing to combat the pandemic and continue to deliver routine services. The scale of the challenge is as apparent as it has ever been. As well as continuing to collaborate across the public, private and voluntary sectors to respond to COVID-19, NHS services are continuing to find innovative ways to support wider patient groups who need access to vital treatments and procedures.

In Swansea Bay University Health Board (UHB) pioneering cancer surgery has been performed for the first time, ensuring that both patients and staff are protected from COVID-19 in the process, while further cancer procedures and treatments are increasingly being delivered across Wales.

A new method of accessing Emergency Departments is being piloted in Cardiff and Vale UHB to support people to access the right services and ensure staff and patients alike comply with social distancing regulations. Meanwhile, patients and families in Hywel Dda UHB, and across other parts of Wales, have been able to stay in touch by utilising digital technology as restrictions on hospital visits continue to safeguard the most vulnerable.

The agility shown by the public, private and the third sectors in response to the Coronavirus pandemic has been outstanding. In the future, it will be integral that we continue our close working relationships and collaborations that we've established and maintained through the pandemic. It will also be important to build on innovative care models and ensure we are able to scale up these services when required and at pace. Throughout COVID-19, we have shown what we can do, and what we can achieve, and it will be for the benefit of everyone in Wales for the NHS, local government, and the third and voluntary sectors to take those lessons forward. 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.

**The COVID-19 Rehabilitation Programme**

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (UHB) has established a new service to help COVID-19 patients previously ventilated in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or Respiratory High Dependency Unit (HDU).

The Royal Gwent Hospital’s Respiratory Team set up this unique collaborative [Rehabilitation Programme](#) to support and aid the recovery of formerly ventilated COVID-19 patients post-discharge.

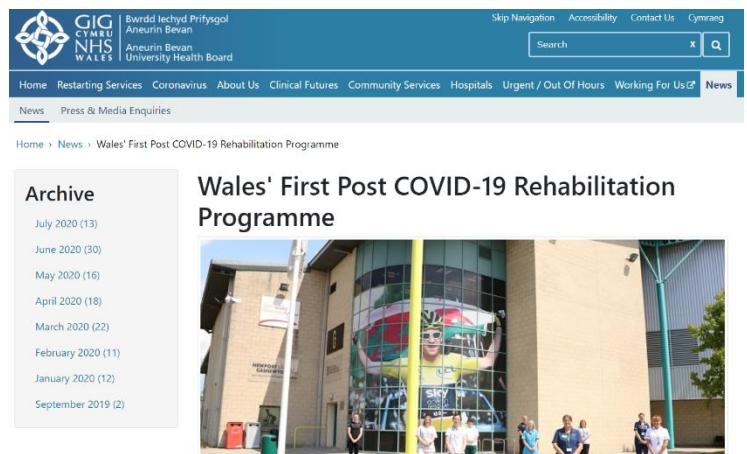
The Programme, the first of its kind in Wales, aims to get patients back to where they want to be, both mentally and physically, following an extended period in ICU or Respiratory HDU. Longer stays in hospital ICU can have a significant impact on a patient’s quality of life. The service seeks to provide exclusive support to this group of patients.

The Programme brings together a range of specialist services under one roof and includes input from Respiratory, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Dietetics, Psychology services and the National Exercise

Referral Team. All the support is driven and led by the patient, tailoring the programme to their individual need.

The Respiratory Team identified the need for post-ventilated patients to have dedicated rehabilitation to aid physical and mental recovery. It was also driven by requests from patients and family members post-discharge who wanted advice as to how they could best support the distinct and specialist patient requirements.

The programme, solely for patients who have been ventilated, runs over an eight week period and involves a total of 40 patients, all of whom have been identified by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) assessment as patients who would benefit from specialist input from a range of support services.



**An online learning resource to teach children about infection control, prevention and antibiotics**

A North Wales pharmacist is helping parents who are home schooling their children access learning about infection prevention, micro-organisms, and antibiotic use.

Antimicrobial Pharmacist Kailey Sassi-Jones has developed a short series of [lessons](#) to support children’s learning. The free bilingual resource has also been emailed from Public Health Wales NHS Trust to all healthy school co-ordinators in Wales to share with their primary schools.

The modules are aimed at children in years three and four of primary school, but can be used by younger children with supervision, as well as older children who can expand on the set activities which follow the short presentation. Resources include crosswords, word searches and other interactive activities to help children learn about what harmful organisms are and how viruses like the flu cause disease.

Kailey says: *“While the resource is purposefully not specific to Coronavirus, it does include information on what it is and how it’s transmitted within the wider context of other harmful organisms. The training is geared toward teaching younger children about what bugs are, and how we protect ourselves and others from infection”*. As well as being free for parents and carers to access at home, the modules are also being shared with schools across North Wales to support teaching in classrooms.



**Cardiff and  
Vale  
University  
Health Board**

**CAV 24/7: Redesigning access to urgent and emergency care services at the University Hospital of Wales**

Cardiff and Vale UHB is trialing a new initiative which aims to ensure more people receive the most appropriate service in a timely manner by avoiding unnecessary journeys to an Emergency Department (ED).

Under the new initiative, a telephone triage system has been set up, called the '[CAV 24/7](#)'. The service has been launched as part of a 'pathfinder' for this new approach in Wales. A clinical review of patients accessing the Emergency Department at the University Hospital of Wales was undertaken as part of local development work. The review found 60% of total patient attendances were suitable for the 'CAV 24/7' pathfinder model, with 21% of patient presentations suitable for self-care, advice or assessment in an alternative setting.

Surveys previously commissioned by the Welsh Government and NHS Wales on access to emergency care services found that the significant majority (88%) of those surveyed thought it was important to provide medical advice on the phone where possible if that avoided the need for an escalation in care (i.e. an ambulance response).

The pathfinder approach has been developed locally by clinical leaders from across primary, community and emergency care and is the source of an extensive marketing campaign targeted at residents of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The approach will also enable other Health Boards in Wales to consider and, if appropriate, evolve similar models. The intent is to scale to a national 'once for Wales' approach subject to robust evaluation of staff and patient experience which will be central to further development and implementation.



**Cwm Taf  
Morgannwg  
University  
Health Board**

**Distance Aware campaign**

An anaesthetics trainee at Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB has teamed up with life peer Baroness Ilora Finlay to launch a national campaign to protect people who have been shielding from Coronavirus after coming up with the idea of a simple pin badge to encourage ongoing social distancing.

Helen Iliff, who works at Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil, realised the need for a ‘polite prompt’ to others to maintain a respectful distance as lockdown restrictions started to ease. Her idea for a [Distance Aware](#) symbol, which shows a protective yellow shield, is being rolled out across Wales and other parts of the UK after being adopted by NHS Wales and endorsed by Welsh Government and health think tank, the Bevan Commission.

The pin badge, with the shield in a white circle, has been designed to be worn by anyone who is keen to promote ongoing distancing. The shield signifies protection, while blue chevrons around the edge of the shield symbolise the NHS and the continued need to be alert. The shield is also available in a range of other colours to ensure maximum inclusivity and the symbol can be used on lanyards, stickers and other merchandise.

With the initiative adopted by NHS Wales, it is hoped that the badges will quickly be available across Wales. NHS Shared Services has sourced a manufacturer, while an NHS supplier has offered to meet the cost of an initial 130,000 badges. Helen, who has worked from home for much of the pandemic, has begun researching distribution streams with supermarkets and large retail brands in a bid to ensure maximum accessibility.



## **Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)**

### **Welsh Clinical Leadership Training Fellows**

As part of its ongoing commitment to developing high quality clinical managers for the future NHS through Quality Improvement Skills Training, HEIW has worked with the Welsh Government and NHS Wales organisations to provide Welsh Clinical Leadership Training Fellowships (WCLTFs).

The WCLTF scheme is a ‘one-year-out’ programme for doctors, dentists, pharmacists and optometrists designed to provide training and experience in Clinical Leadership and Management that equips health professionals with a range of knowledge and skills required to undertake clinical leadership roles in the modern NHS. WCLTF undertake a leadership and management project from proposals submitted by healthcare organisations in Wales. Leadership Fellows work closely with senior medical, dental, pharmacy and optometry colleagues and are supported in their host organisations by project supervisors.

The prospectus is available in full [here](#).

### **The impact of COVID-19 on training in dentistry and medicine in Wales: Focus group sessions**

A trainee think tank, in collaboration with HEIW and with the support of the General Medical Council (GMC), has facilitated eight focus group discussions that explore different themes relating to the impact that COVID-19 has had on training in dentistry and medicine in Wales.

The groups are intended to be an open forum for trainees to speak openly about how their training programmes have been impacted by the pandemic. Specifically, HEIW would like to hear from trainees about:

- Whether changes to the ways in which people work have had positive impacts on patient care
- Whether communication between manager and trainees has improved as a result of increased remote working
- Rota structures; and
- The affect COVID-19 has had on trainees’ annual leave and what impact this could have later in the year.

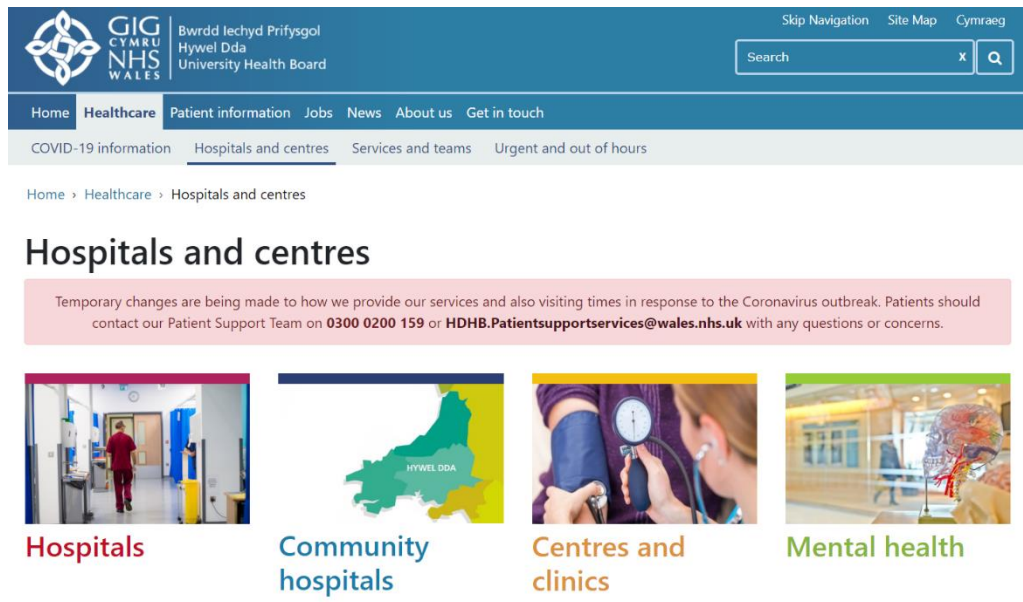
For further information, see [here](#).

**Supporting families to stay in touch with loved ones during the pandemic**

It was identified early in Hywel Dda UHB’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic that one of the negative impacts would be increased levels of anxiety among both patients and their families brought about by the necessary suspension of hospital visits.

To address this, Hywel Dda UHB introduced a number of family liaison roles. Their main duty is to support families and ensure that they are able to remain connected with patients in hospital. The Health Board has purchased a number of digital devices to enable staff to support patients in the use of technology to maintain contact with loved ones.

Furthermore, Hywel Dda UHB has introduced a ‘Stop & Drop’ service operated through a patient advice and liaison service (PALS). The service enables relatives to bring new clothes, toiletries and other essentials and ensure that families feel able to care and provide for their loved ones during their admission. Crucially, centralising the service allowed the Health Board to maintain a level of control over incoming items for infection, prevention and control purposes. Similar services have been introduced in other Health Boards across Wales.



**Hospitals and centres**

Temporary changes are being made to how we provide our services and also visiting times in response to the Coronavirus outbreak. Patients should contact our Patient Support Team on **0300 0200 159** or **HDHB.Patientupportservices@wales.nhs.uk** with any questions or concerns.

- Hospitals**
- Community hospitals**
- Centres and clinics**
- Mental health**



**Accelerating digital transformation to respond to COVID-19**

COVID-19 has presented significant operational and clinical challenges to all NHS organisations, but from such challenges come opportunities for transformative change. To realise this opportunity, Powys Teaching Health Board has created the new post of Assistant Director of Digital Transformation and Informatics. The postholder’s primary responsibility is to drive forward a “digital COVID journey” and harness the potential of digital technology to improve outcomes for patients across the Health Board.

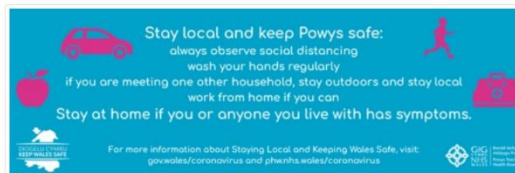
Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Health Board has:

- Provided 113 additional laptops to staff to support working from home;
- Supported nearly 1,200 staff to access the Wales Community Care Information system (WCCIS) digital platform;
- Provided training to 450 members of staff so that they can access the Welsh Clinical Portal (WCP), including 94 new members;
- Developed data feeds to ensure information relating to vulnerable/shielded groups is captured through the Wales Patient Administration System (WPAS) and then shared with NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS);
- Rolled out Microsoft Teams to 100% of Health Board staff; and
- Implemented the [Consultant Connect](#) app, which gives local doctors, physician associates, specialist & consultant nurses and other local specialist clinicians access to secondary care providers who can provide advice that is appropriate to the patient’s needs within minutes.



Home > News > Health Board News > #KeepPowysSafe - Consultant Connect App launches in Powys

**#KeepPowysSafe - Consultant Connect App launches in Powys**



The launch of a new NHS app in Wales, Consultant Connect, is set to reduce the need for Powys residents to travel for unnecessary hospital

## Public Health Wales NHS Trust

### World-leading genome sequencing to support the COVID-19 response in Wales and internationally

Since the beginning of March, the Public Health Wales Pathogen Genomics Unit has been working to sequence and analyse every available SARS-CoV-2 sample from patients in Wales to support the pandemic response within Wales, the UK and globally. Genome sequencing is the process where the genome – the blueprint – of an organism is read using a specialised instrument called a sequencing instrument. Using this information, it is possible to track the spread and evolution of pathogens over time and estimate important epidemiological parameters such as the ‘R number’.

Working with over 500 people from 17 sequencing centres across the UK as part of the [COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium](#) (COG-UK), Public Health Wales has been playing a leading national role in the generation of sequencing data. To date, over 5,000 SARS-CoV-2 genomes have been sequenced. This places Wales 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world for COVID-19 genomes sequenced, behind only the USA and England.

As a founding member of the COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) Consortium, Public Health Wales has supported analyses to understand the spread of COVID-19 in the UK, as well as sharing data internationally to support the global pandemic response. Within Wales, the COVID-19 genomics work formed one of the work streams within the National Testing Strategy for COVID-19. Staff have been utilising SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence data to undertake outbreak investigations, support surveillance activities and provide evidence-based advice to the Welsh Government and the UK government (via SAGE).

The Pathogen Genomics Unit has built a complete COVID-19 genomics service which is truly world leading and is delivering real benefits to the people of Wales. This achievement is a great credit to the team, while also reflecting the benefit of longstanding collaborative links with Cardiff University and the investment that the Welsh Government has provided as part of the Genomics for Precision Medicine Strategy.



Uned Genomeg Pathogen  
(PenGU)  
Pathogen Genomics Unit



### **World first procedure allows complex skin cancer op to continue during outbreak**

Pioneering work in Swansea Bay UHB means a complex skin cancer procedure can continue while patients are awake - for the first time anywhere in the world. Sentinel lymph node biopsies can potentially save the lives of people with melanoma by detecting at an early stage whether the cancer has spread.

Until now, these procedures have been carried out under general anaesthetic. The COVID-19 outbreak has created significant risks with this, leading to the service having to be suspended. So Morriston Hospital's plastic surgery and anaesthetics teams have developed a technique using a series of specially-developed nerve blocks, which allows these biopsies to continue.

Consultant plastic surgeon Jonathan Cubitt (*pictured, left*) said: "Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the way we function as a hospital and the ability we have to deliver cancer care. Melanoma is a skin cancer that can be life-threatening. A sentinel lymph node biopsy is a surgical technique that allows early detection of melanoma spread and therefore access to oncological treatment, if needed. This will significantly reduce the risk of melanoma recurrence and therefore improve disease-free survival."



#### **So how does it work?**

The day before the biopsy, a small amount of radioactive tracer is injected near the primary site of the cancer. A scanner follows its progress through the lymphatic system to identify the sentinel node or nodes. These are surgically removed the next day and examined to see whether there has been any spread of the cancer cells. The surgery has been carried out in Swansea Bay for four years. It was offered to all South Wales patients until the outbreak started.

A multi-disciplinary team manages the patients, from the GPs who refer them, the dermatologists who make the diagnosis, the nuclear physicists in Singleton Hospital who map the sentinel nodes and the anaesthetists and plastic surgeons who carry out the surgery.

### **Maintaining world-leading service provision at Velindre Cancer Centre despite COVID-19 challenges**

Staff at Velindre Cancer Centre have worked hard to ensure that people who require treatments receive those services in the usual manner. While there have been some physical changes to the Centre itself – for example, the provision of additional bed capacity - radiotherapy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy services are being delivered in the normal manner. Consultant Dr Ricky Frazier has taken part in a YouTube video which explains some of the changes that have taken place and what patients should expect upon visiting the Centre. The video is available [here](#).



Staff at Velindre Cancer Centre recognise that some people, particularly shielding groups, might not feel comfortable attending the hospital for treatment. Should they have any concerns, cancer patients are strongly encouraged to contact the Centre via phone through the virtual assessment clinic. The clinic is designed to ensure that patients are well enough to continue their treatment by answering a few questions over the phone beforehand, instead of inviting patients to visit the Centre and be forced to wait in a small outpatients' department.

For patients requiring a blood test, the Centre have put in place a system where patients arriving by car are told to telephone the Centre upon arrival and expect a follow-up call from a member of staff when it is time for their appointment. Again, this avoids a potential gathering of people in the outpatients' department, where it is difficult to maintain social distancing.

Staff also recognise that not everyone finds it easy to accurately express themselves over the phone, particularly when they're discussing the affects they've experienced since undergoing previous treatments. To support patients in doing so, Velindre Cancer Centre has produced a Toxicity Grading Sheet. The sheet provides an overview of what sort of experiences constitute mild, moderate and severe effects of common toxicities post-treatment, such as nausea, vomiting, dehydration and altered sensation. The sheet is available [here](#).

**Welsh  
Ambulance  
Services NHS  
Trust (WAST)**

**A collaborative effort to uncover innovative ways of speeding up the sanitisation of ambulances**

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, WAST's Infection, Prevention & Control (IPC) team have partnered with Welsh Government, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), which is an executive agency of the UK's Ministry of Defence, and Wales' Small Business Research Initiative Centre of Excellence (SBRICE) to identify technological solutions to rapidly sanitise ambulance vehicles.

The project has successfully identified several types of technology that may provide enhanced sanitisation to a range of healthcare environments, as well as explore challenges and usability within unique settings such as ambulance vehicles. This learning can be applied to a range of healthcare vehicles that are in use across NHS Wales.

DSTL is due to publish the project's final report this year, but an advisory document has already been produced to inform health and care organisations on evaluation and selection of sanitisation products.

WAST's IPC team has also worked with Public Health Wales to share learning from this work. Provisionally, several opportunities have been identified for the development of shared knowledge and potential resources, subject to ongoing evaluation and business case development for innovations currently undergoing trial.



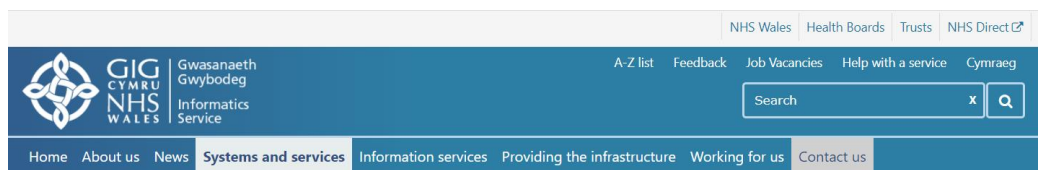
**NHS Wales  
 Informatics  
 Services  
 (NWIS)**

**New digital service supports local pharmacy prescribing**

Since June 2020, a new module of the Choose Pharmacy application, the Independent Prescribers' Service (IPS), has been supporting community pharmacists who have qualified as non-medical prescribers to provide patients presenting with certain conditions with access to effective advice and treatment. This is part of the expanding Choose Pharmacy digital platform, developed by the NWIS, which includes services such as emergency contraception, a common ailments service and discharge medicine reviews.

The service enables pharmacists to record the consultation, generate a GP summary and/or referral letters and create a patient history, which moves with the patient if they change pharmacies. To inform decisions, pharmacists qualified as non-medical prescribers have access to the patient's digital Welsh GP Record. This includes a summary of important information, such as current medication, recent tests and allergies.

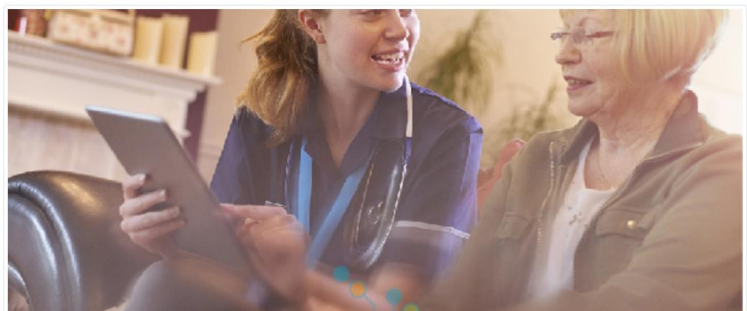
Emma Williams, Choose Pharmacy Clinical Lead, NWIS, said: *"The Independent Prescribers' Service supports a 'community pharmacy first' model of care. This means patients have more access to advice and treatment at the right time, in the right place, reducing pressure on GPs for consultations for conditions that can be appropriately managed in the community pharmacy setting. This is particularly relevant during the current healthcare crisis, when ensuring greater access and options for patient care is more important than ever"*.



Home > Systems and services > In the community > Choose Pharmacy

- In the community ▾
- Choose Pharmacy
- Digital Community Care Record
- Child Health

**Choose Pharmacy**



**NHS Wales  
Shared  
Services  
Partnership  
(NWSSP)**

**Supporting patient access vital palliative care medication during COVID-19**

The Health Courier Service within NWSSP has worked closely with the All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre (AWTTC) to ensure vital palliative care medication reaches terminally ill patients during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Healthcare professionals identified palliative care medication as being a major concern when caring for terminally ill patients during COVID-19, which had the potential to compromise the delivery of the best standard of End of Life (EoL) care. The period of unprecedented pressure created by COVID-19 led to increased demands and concerns around the availability of End of Life medicine, requiring a rapid change of approach.

AWTTC worked collaboratively with a number of organisations including NWSSP, Marie Curie and the Welsh Blood Service to develop the End of Life COVID-19 Medicines Service. AWTTC's multi-disciplinary team undertook a significant role in co-ordinating this national medicine service across Wales by deploying a member of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit (WAPSU) to project manage the development and implementation of the service.

The End of Life Service, which was developed in just six days, provides a single-point of access to 'Just in Time' Emergency Medication Packs. Through effective collaboration with NWSSP's Health Courier Service, 'Just in Time' Emergency Medicine Packs can be delivered to any location across Wales within two hours. The delivery of this vital medication ensures rapid symptom control, allowing dignified care of people as they move towards the end of their life.



### 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](mailto:Darren.Hughes@welshconfed.org)

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