

Social Care Compendium of Good Practice

Learning from innovation and new ways
of working during Covid-19



ADSS Cymru

Yn arwain Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol yng Nghymru
Leading Social Services in Wales

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Introduction

ADSS Cymru was commissioned by Welsh Government to investigate innovation in social care during Covid-19. The team met with individuals and groups representing all local authority areas to better understand key activities.

Several engagement methods were used including focus groups or ‘practice bubbles’ with staff, surveys, workshops and informal interviews with a range of cross sector partners, submissions of case studies as well as liaising with a reference group throughout the project. A separate report, ‘Evolving Social Care Services Through Covid-19 – Strategic Alignment, Best Practice, and Learning for the Future’, was produced.

However, the full breadth and scale of what has been achieved could not be contained within a report. For this reason, we wanted to create a resource that could be circulated widely across the sector to share key learning and success stories, as well as to share some of the reflections on challenges that were experienced.

This was a very difficult time for people working in the public sector, and in many ways the challenges continue in the cost of living crisis and ongoing staffing shortages.

We hope that this document provides inspiration and supports with reflecting on what has been achieved. One of the key messages shared was that there has not been enough time to reflect and absorb what has happened, or to share with others.

The resource is divided into eight sections, each providing some key messages from our engagement, alongside some case study examples. We hope that you find it interesting and helpful, and we would like to thank everyone who contributed to this work. This document was produced in spring 2023 and all details were correct at the time of publication.

Please click through the document using the navigation.

Project Themes

The resources have been grouped into eight key themes, and you will see the icons below throughout the document. Each case study is set against the relevant theme and some have a few themes. At the beginning of each project theme section, you will find a description of the theme and the key messages gathered from the projects. Use the navigation buttons at the bottom left of each page to explore the document. The 'Home' icon will bring you back to this page, and you can click on the theme icons here to view the projects in each section.'



Partnership Working



Care Close to Home



Prevention and Wellbeing



Support for Carers



Children and Families



Workforce



Work with Care Providers



Digital and Communications



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Partnership Working

Local authorities reported several new partnership initiatives during the pandemic.

This included working closely with health and voluntary sector partners to provide wraparound care to individuals in the community, as well as emergency support to ensure people had access to essentials such as food, social care and money advice.



Partnership
Working

Key Messages

- Strong communication across sectors led to greater success (for example, joint meetings and regular calls between organisations).
- Joint recruitment, pooled funds and shared referral processes improved partnerships.
- Changes to working arrangements created both challenges and opportunities, but differences between social care and health led to feelings of division.
- Social care worked much more closely with volunteers and the voluntary sector than before the pandemic to meet communities' needs.
- Health and social care working together led to a reduction in hospital admission and more timely discharge home.
- It was necessary to work more closely with education to identify safeguarding risks.
- Better contingency planning going forward and increased focus on prevention initiatives across sectors would have the greatest positive impact.

Twilight Sanctuary Service



Partnership
Working



Prevention
and Wellbeing

Background

This joint initiative is funded by Hywel Dda University Health Board in partnership with two local authorities, Dyfed Powys Police, Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust and third sector organisations. A Carmarthenshire location opened in 2019, and another then opened in Pembroke in November 2020 in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Purpose

To provide support to people experiencing mental distress at times when traditional services are closed. To ensure access to appropriate supports, and to reduce unnecessary admissions.

Overview

The service operates from 6pm to 2am on weekends (peak hours for crisis activity). Drop-in centres are based in voluntary sector buildings and can be accessed via self-referral. Support offered is of a non-clinical nature, that is, to promote addressing underlying causes of distress, and signposting to activities and supports in the local area.

The service is not for individuals experiencing a medical emergency or at immediate risk. The most common reason people attend includes low mood, anxiety, financial stress, relationship issues, housing crisis, social isolation or bereavement issues. People can attend in-person, speak to a supportive person by phone, or use the text service.

Twilight Sanctuary Service



Partnership
Working



Prevention
and Wellbeing

Goals include:

- Improved experience for the citizen through timely assessment
- People feeling distressed to feel listened to in a safe place to share their concerns

Services work together to ensure individuals receive the most appropriate support, and often the centres are used as an alternative to admission.

Challenges

- Opening hours: citizens wished the service was available 24/7
- Raising awareness of the service
- Ensuring all referrers understood service criteria

Opportunities and enablers

- Care close to home
- Timely support, avoidance of need for emergency services

Twilight Sanctuary Service



Partnership
Working



Prevention
and Wellbeing

Opportunities and enablers

- Care close to home
- Timely support, avoidance of need for emergency services

Partners



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board



get in
touch...

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For more information visit:

www.mindpembrokeshire.org.uk or www.llanelli-mind.org.uk

Scan the QR code with your device to watch a video.



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Cardiff Homelessness Project



Background

People who are homeless face multiple barriers when trying to access health and social care services. In Cardiff, a multidisciplinary team has been established that crosses service boundaries and is designed to assist people who are struggling to access support to get the right help, in the right place and at the right time.

Overview

- Provides therapeutic intervention and treatment to people experiencing homelessness
 - Focuses on delivering person-centred support
 - Meets weekly to consider referrals and support plans
- It is a team of clinicians and practitioners from different organisations including Cardiff Council, NHS, Pobl, Taith Change Gro Live (CGL), Dyfodol Kaleidoscope, South Wales Police and Probation.
 - The role of the service is to provide therapeutic opportunities for engagement with accessible therapeutic and treatment interventions.
 - Working closely with the referring agency, the team will meet with service users, discuss their specific requirements and set up individual support plans.
 - They include statutory and voluntary services such as CMHTs, GPs and other agencies and involve them in order that they provide longer-term support.
 - The objective of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) is to **help individuals create pathways into mainstream services.**

Cardiff Homelessness Project



Partnership Working



Care Close to Home



Workforce

Challenges

- The pandemic presented challenges but the team was able to continue supporting people throughout this period.

Opportunities and enablers

Because many different teams are working together, a whole range of support becomes available to people referred to this service, including:

- Mental health support and advice
- Therapeutic and counselling support
- Nutrition, health and wellbeing advice

- Substance and alcohol advice and intervention, including opiate substitute prescribing
- Primary care access
- Physical health advice and treatment including access to social service wellbeing assessments (care and support)
- Diversionary activities including educational, therapeutic and physical activities
- Access to training and employment or voluntary work

Partners



Cardiff Homelessness Project



Partnership Working



Care Close to Home



Workforce

What do we do?

Our role is to provide therapeutic opportunities for engagement with accessible therapeutic and treatment interventions for individuals with complex support needs. Working closely with the referring agency, we will meet with service users, discuss their specific requirements, and set up individual support plans. We will include statutory and voluntary services such as CMHTs, GPs and other agencies and will involve them in order that they provide longer-term support.

The overall objective of the MDT is to help individuals create pathways into mainstream services.

Who are we?

The Homeless MDT is a team of clinicians and practitioners from a number of different organisations that include Cardiff Council, NHS, Pob!, Tath Change Grow Live (CGL), Dyfodol Kaleidoscope, South Wales Police and Probation.

The MDT is made up of the following:

- GP
- RAPS
- Dietitian
- Probation
- Counsellors
- Adult Services
- Into Work Coach
- Community Police
- Primary Care Nurse
- Mental Health Nurse
- Diversionary Activities
- Occupational Therapist
- Mental Health Social Worker
- Therapeutic Outreach Workers
- Specialist Women's Case Co-ordinator
- Substance Outreach Recovery Workers



What type of support do we provide?

The MDT provide support that can include:

- Mental health intervention
- Therapeutic and counselling support
- Dietary related health and wellbeing advice
- Substance and alcohol advice and intervention, including opiate substitute prescribing
- Physical and mental health advice and treatment including access to occupational therapist and social service wellbeing assessments (care and support)
- Diversionary activities including educational, therapeutic and physical activities
- Access to training and employment / voluntary work.



How is this service paid for?

The project is funded through a number of different revenue sources, including Complex Needs Funding, Housing Support Grant and self-organisational funding.



How do I access the service?

An individual can be referred to the MDT service by any professional working in homelessness, provided that the individual is within the homelessness population and meets the following criteria:

- Currently homeless and living in homeless accommodation (hostels etc)
- History of repeated homelessness and / or at risk of being evicted
- People sleeping rough
- People seeking to move away from begging

This is not a generic population service and anyone that has moved out of homelessness must access mainstream community services.

For more information and a referral form, please contact the team via:

Email: HomelessnessMDT@cardiff.gov.uk
Telephone: 02920 570715



get in touch...

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Denbighshire Complex Case Meetings



Background

It was identified that for people with complex needs, accessing a wide range of services can lead to a number of challenges, such as conflicting appointment times and different care planning approaches across sectors. With the increased risks associated with Covid-19, additional work was required to try to prevent hospital admission for people who are clinically vulnerable.

Purpose

The purpose of complex case meetings was to prevent admission as well as supporting faster discharge home.

Overview

During the pandemic, Denbighshire worked more closely with primary care colleagues by holding weekly complex case meetings between local authority staff and GPs to discuss the care of people with multiple needs.



Denbighshire Complex Case Meetings



Partnership
Working



Care Close
to Home

Challenges

- Identifying appropriate individuals
- Establishing process
- Scheduling diaries in times of pressure

Opportunities and enablers

- Positive relationships between primary care and crisis teams
- A more joined up response and better service for individuals
- Better understanding between services and avoidance of duplication
- Reducing risk of admission

get in
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Swansea Grants Programme



Partnership
Working



Care Close
to Home



Prevention
and Wellbeing



Children
and Families

Background

The Swansea Bay Regional Partnership Board identified the impacts of loneliness and isolation for older people caused by the pandemic, and decided to work in partnership with providers to offer more community programs.

Purpose

To improve access to timely support, social opportunities and to promote community connections for older people during the pandemic.

Overview

The microenterprise grants program was put in place using Welsh Government funding. In total, 56 community providers were able to facilitate a wide range of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, social events and pilot projects.

Challenges

- Coordination between all the different organisations
- Additional administrative and project capacity to support the process would have been beneficial.

Swansea Grants Programme



Partnership
Working



Care Close
to Home



Prevention
and Wellbeing



Children
and Families

Opportunities and enablers

- The program supported many older people, and also boosted very small businesses in the community during a time of need.
- Some areas have been able to establish new community hubs to help with food and finance and citizen's advice, i.e. 'one stop shops'.
- Evaluation of activities will demonstrate which types of initiatives were most successful.

Efficient care

One local authority was able to establish an agreement with the health board that domiciliary care staff could refer people directly to access clinical help when needed. This helped reduce the need for additional primary care visits and prevented deterioration.

get in
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Care Close to Home

During the pandemic, there was focused effort to keep people at home to avoid the spread of infection.

This resulted in changes to the way care was delivered. Local authorities had to pivot to new ways of working and needed to be innovative amidst staffing challenges. Hospital admission became a last resort. What follows are some examples of good practice.



Care Close
to Home

Key Messages

- Carers were negatively impacted by the lack of physical respite care and breaks from caring during the pandemic. They spoke about feeling exhausted in their caring role.
- There is a need to establish a safety net when things go wrong and to have contingency plans in place should there be future disruption.

Delta Connect Carmarthenshire Enhanced Lifeline and Telecare



Background

This pilot project was funded with Welsh Government's transformation fund through the West Wales Care Partnership Board.

Purpose

To prevent harm and provide early help to people through wellbeing calls that identify need at the earliest possible opportunity.

Overview

The service offers flexible packages supporting individuals to live independently for as long as possible using technology-enabled care (TEC). This includes red button lifelines, fall detectors, GPS trackers, door sensors, medication dispensers and many other useful devices.

People can contact the service directly to self-refer. Referrals are also received from social care or health professionals. A wellbeing assessment identifies the level of support required, and follow-up calls, activities and other supports are provided. A 24/7 community responder service is also offered for those in distress or crisis.

Delta Connect Carmarthenshire Enhanced Lifeline and Telecare



Challenges

- No challenges were identified and the project was extended.

Opportunities and enablers

- This project has worked well, building on the rapid response element of the Delta Connect model. Funding has been identified under Transforming Urgent and Emergency Care to make this service mainstream.



For more information and to watch a video
www.deltawellbeing.org.uk/delta-connect/
Or scan the QR code with your device.

get in touch...

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Powys: Telephone / Video Reviews for Clients with Learning Disabilities



Background

Prior to Covid-19, all reviews were taken face-to-face at the client's supported tenancy and would involve a large gathering of professionals, family members, care staff and the client. Family members and professionals would travel a long distance to attend, requiring travel of up to four hours each way (and maybe an overnight stay) for a meeting lasting ninety minutes. For clients with learning disabilities, meetings can be boring, long-winded and overwhelming, with too many people.

Purpose

To undertake reviews in a way that puts the client at the centre of the process and not the paperwork.

Overview

This project focussed on undertaking telephone reviews to support tenancies for learning disabled clients. Reviews are usually carried out yearly unless circumstances warrant an earlier review. Reviews are completed with clients, care staff, social worker, and family members.

These reviews were generally well received by clients and their families, with several clients requesting more video calls as they were less overwhelming and they felt more free to walk around and have breaks.

'Why haven't we done this before? It's much better. I never see my sibling on review days because of travelling so it is a long journey just for a meeting.' (Family member)

Powys: Telephone / Video Reviews for Clients with Learning Disabilities



Challenges

- None reported in respect of new ways of working

Opportunities and enablers

- Achieving a person-centred, strengths-based approach to reviews
- Building greater trust and rapport by making actual visits more social (with review calls by video)

'You can't truthfully say you have seen them at home when all you do is come in, sit at a table, talk to a lot of people, and go again. You need social calls so the client can relax and trust you.' (Care Manager)

get in touch...

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Alternatives to Respite



Background

With the onset of the pandemic, traditional respite options such as short stays in a care home or trips out were not available. Care homes were protected to prevent the spread of infection. This meant minimising people entering buildings and, for periods of time, no new admissions. It also meant long periods where carers were supporting loved ones without the breaks they normally have, increased stress and risk of burnout.

Purpose

To ensure carers and families were supported to have respite opportunities despite restrictions.

Overview

There were a wide range of innovations including:

- The offer of 1:1 support and small group activities to replace day centres
- Replacing residential care with 24-hour domiciliary care
- Deploying reablement staff and equipment to support step down from residential care
- Using direct payments differently to enable people to purchase care outside the traditional boundaries

Alternatives to Respite



Challenges

- It was difficult to source carers to provide alternatives to respite due to system pressures and not all packages could be honoured.

Opportunities and enablers

- Increased flexibility around how direct payments could be used offered a range of new ways for people to feel supported
- 24-hour home care/sitting service was found to be an effective alternative when other services were closed.
- More social (with review calls by video)



Alternatives to Hospital Admission



Background

With hospitals full to capacity during Covid-19, there was a renewed focus on providing care close to home and preventing unnecessary hospital admission for individuals whose health was at risk. Local authorities worked with health and voluntary partners to prevent deterioration in health and to support people most at risk of admission to hospital.

Purpose

To initiate care close to home that prevents the need for hospital admission and to support timely discharge from hospital.

Overview

There were a wide range of innovations including:

- Many local authorities used funding to purchase needed equipment to facilitate independent living.
- Small grants schemes for adapted furniture
- Some local authorities appointed a discharge co-ordinator to work closely with health in supporting timely discharges from hospital. Many have kept these roles on an ongoing basis.
- Some local authorities have established a nighttime response service for people whose health is deteriorating and who might be at risk of hospital admission. The service seeks to address issues 24 hours a day to prevent further decline.

Alternatives to Hospital Admission



Challenges

- During Covid-19 some suppliers had shipping and transport delays.
- Without sustained funding, it was not always possible to keep staff in post on a longer term basis.
- It was difficult to source nighttime sitters at times but the scheme has worked well.
- Creating new relationships across sectors so quickly was hard at a time of unprecedented pressures.

Opportunities and enablers

- Some equipment enabled single-handed rather than 2:1 care for people, which made it more likely that a successful care package could be sourced in a timely manner.
- Smoother transitions for service users
- WAST, GP, health board teams and the local authority worked together to identify need and to put care in place immediately when required.
- It is recommended that this model be ready to deploy ahead of any future crisis, as it was challenging to achieve amidst a difficult situation.



Prevention and Wellbeing



A focus on keeping people well meant the initiation of a wide range of new programs to support the community – everything from food banks to social clubs.

The pandemic put a lot of pressure on local authorities, but also galvanized the community and volunteers in a way that had not been seen in recent times.



Prevention
and Wellbeing

Key Messages

- The power of volunteering became evident as communities pulled together to support their neighbours.
- Local authorities played a key role in coordinating activities and communicating help available.
- Many activities have continued as the cost of living crisis has developed, such as food distribution and financial support.
- Community wellbeing activities and resources can reduce the pressures on services.
- There is a clear role for statutory services to work together to support the community in times of crisis.
- The voluntary sector plays a valuable part in supporting resilience and in the delivery of prevention and wellbeing activities.

Conwy Recovery College



Background

This project is an ambitious offer to establish a recovery college in North Wales. Conwy Local Authority has set the following vision:

A co-produced recovery college for the county of Conwy, which enables people to restore hope, build resilience, connect and create a community and sustain themselves to have a satisfying and purposeful life.

Purpose

To offer learning opportunities to people with lived experience of mental health issues. This will involve a range of courses.

Recovery colleges offer educational courses about mental wellbeing, supporting personal recovery.

The ethos is to increase students' knowledge and skills and help them take control by learning self-management strategies to help their mental health and wellbeing.



Conwy Recovery College



Overview

There are a number of stages involved in setting up a recovery college:

The Recovery pathway provides early intervention for people to avoid escalation to statutory services or a step-down from care services to continue their recovery journey.

The College aims to capitalise on the previous ‘Learning for Recovery and Wellbeing Programme’, which illustrated the various opportunities available across a range of groups and organisations, specifically to support mental health and wellbeing.

There were four key aspects to the initial programme, to give the optimum opportunity to flourish:

- ‘Understanding my mental health’
- ‘Life skills and healthy lifestyle’
- ‘Social network and community connection’
- ‘Moving forward’

However, a key gap that was identified was the provision of recovery education courses, which increase people’s awareness, knowledge, understanding and ability to either manage their own diagnosis or support someone they care for.

Conwy Recovery College



Overview

There are two phases to the project:

- To build the infrastructure and knowledge to be able to design and develop the College co-productively and recruit a revised Facilitator role. This is in order to effectively fill the gap in recovery education provision and is being supported by UKCRF funding.
- To embed and evolve the College, including the expansion of partners and affiliations, so that it is fully implemented with sufficient capacity to respond to the needs of the students and other beneficiaries.
- To develop a collaborative approach between health, social care, people with lived experience and the third sector. This would be a powerful and systematic approach that would offer many benefits.

Conwy Recovery College



Challenges

This is a large project and requires support across sectors. It will take some time to establish and is currently a work in progress. Challenges included:

- Recruiting a College Co-ordinator during the pandemic: no applications were received
- Being able to co-produce effectively required culture change, gaining of knowledge and practice
- Budget constraints
- Questions around benefits and ability to offer a physical versus a virtual college
- Capacity, especially during the first part of the pandemic, to focus time and energy to move forward

Conwy Recovery College



Opportunities and enablers

It is hoped that the College will:

- Increase understanding of mental health and wellbeing
- Support self-management
- Co-produce content in partnership with people with lived experience
- Support early intervention
- Reduce stigma
- Reduce the need to access formal services
- Help people achieve a purposeful life
- Support effective participation from home due to rapid development in IT delivery methods during the pandemic
- Foster good relationships with the third sector
- Facilitated support for co-production
- Supports the Social services and Wellbeing Act (promotes wellbeing, co-production, assets-based approaches, prevention and early intervention)
- Enables knowledge of the community
- Uses an asset-based approach to identify possible partners and collaborations

Conwy Recovery College



Prevention
and Wellbeing



Support
for Carers

Partners

- Mental Wellness Team
- Aberconwy Mind



get in
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North Wales iCAN Program – Community Hubs



Background

The iCAN Service across North Wales was put in place to support people with a range of practical and mental wellbeing matters. This continues to be a well-accessed service and is delivered as a partnership between the local authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

Purpose

The iCAN Service supports anyone that is experiencing low levels of emotional wellbeing or mental health concerns.

Staff will listen without judgement and help people to access the services and support needed, all under one roof. iCAN Hubs can be accessed on a drop in basis and don't need a referral from a GP or an appointment. The hubs are staffed by a friendly and experienced team of staff and volunteers.

North Wales iCAN Program – Community Hubs



Prevention
and Wellbeing



Care Close
to Home



Partnership
Working

Overview

Support at iCAN Hubs includes:

- Food: community fridges, foodbank, cooked meals, cooking classes
- Accommodation and tenancy support
- Money / debt management / Credit Union / benefit advice
- Legal advice (family, employment, civil matters)
- Fuel and heating support
- Help with finding household goods (including white goods)
- Sensory support
- Domestic abuse support
- Substance misuse support
- Gender support
- Digital inclusion
- Modern slavery and exploitation support
- Support with entry to employment and sustaining employment
- Social prescribing

North Wales iCAN Program – Community Hubs



Longer term impact

The aim of the iCAN Service is to encourage personal resilience across communities. By providing a service that is easily accessible and familiar to residents whilst not directly focussing on mental health, iCAN aims to reduce the number of people reaching crisis point. It does this by working with them to address the wider social determinants of ill health, which can contribute (and very often lead) to low levels of wellbeing and poor mental health.

Learning from the lockdown experience, the iCAN Service is now able to offer a whole range of services virtually and remotely. iCAN is also able to support improved connectivity with services to residents experiencing digital poverty. They offer safe spaces to engage with specialist digital partners within the iCAN Hubs, as well as free data bundles.

North Wales iCAN Program – Community Hubs

Challenges

The value of tier 0/1 services has been historically difficult to measure: the only data currently monitored is footfall and numbers of residents participating across a variety of support interventions. However, a longer-term view is required to not only identify trends in accessing the iCAN Service, but also to measure the potential reduction in residents accessing more acute services, e.g. CMHT or presenting at Emergency Departments.

If iCAN is truly a service that minimises the number of residents reaching crisis point, then a reduction in presentations at these entry points should be observed over time. Some services also had to close down due to restrictions during Covid-19.



Visit the website: [i CAN - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.nhs.uk/iCAN)

Hubs are available in Holyhead, Caernarfon, Maesgeirchen, Pwllheli, Dolgellau, Conwy, Corwen, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Mold/Flint, Holywell, Caia Park and Ty Pawb.



Prevention
and Wellbeing



Care Close
to Home



Partnership
Working

Opportunities and enablers

There is a significant opportunity to widen the iCAN Service to include all ages. In future, there could be opportunity to work with waiting lists for ND diagnosis and also support those who do not get a diagnosis and feel they ‘fall between the cracks’ of support. This could work in a similar way with learning disabilities. Finally, there is an opportunity to offer dedicated low-level perinatal support in North Wales.

Partners

The iCAN Service operates with a support network of over 150 partners from the public and voluntary sector.



Wrexham Friendship Hub



Prevention
and Wellbeing

Background

During the pandemic, many people were isolated as a result of the closure and/or restriction of regular activities.

Purpose

Wrexham Friendship Hub was created for people to access social places and events, and to develop positive relationships. People are enabled to develop their own relationships and social life, with the local authority providing only background support.

Overview

The Friendship Hub is a community of individuals and groups that come together to meet new people, have fun and work together on improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities, or anyone who faces barriers to inclusion. The group is run by the members themselves.

Longer term impact

The Wrexham Friendship Hub is still operating. It has a Facebook page that promotes local inclusive events, and the group meets every Wednesday morning and Thursday afternoon to chat, have a coffee and arrange social meet ups such as bowling, cinema visits, lunches out, nightclub visits, and listening to music.

Wrexham Friendship Hub



Challenges

The challenge has been breaking down the perception of what someone who has a disability and needs support can do. The values of the support staff need to be in line with delivering enabling support, helping people access a quality life including friendships and relationships. These friendships should not be based on disability but on peers. Inclusive access to various local activities is key, breaking the challenge of ‘old-fashioned’ support.

There has also been the challenge of changing the perception that times of support fit in around the support provider rather than the person’s needs, as well as redefining ideas of what is ‘appropriate’.

Opportunities and enablers

There have been opportunities to develop local community assets to support us to deliver the Friendship Hub. Making networks locally and regionally that are supportive and have the same values as the Friendship Hub has also been positive. The Hub has also developed values-based training for local support providers, and is proud to use the support it already has, rather than calling on volunteers or extra support.

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The Friendship Hub

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[The Friendship Hub Wrexham](#)



Support for Carers



The pandemic had a huge impact on the informal carer network, and there is a need to consider a safety net for any future disruptions.

Local authorities should place emphasis on the value of the unpaid workforce and take steps to support carers, who report being at breaking point without their usual respite options available.



**Support
for Carers**

Key Messages

- The pandemic had a huge impact on carers and families.
- The huge value unpaid carers offer to keeping people well should be valued and recognized.
- It would be helpful to have a more strategic approach to commissioning, with more consistency.
- Direct payments and flexible respite were useful to establish creative alternatives for families.
- Block booking of care homes has helped with ensuring there is more availability in crisis situations.
- Voluntary sector support offered to carer's assessments helped to connect people directly with supportive activities, which has led to greater resilience.

Ceredigion Break in a Box



Background

Covid-19 restrictions during lockdown meant it was difficult for carers to access respite. Ceredigion came up with a novel way for carers to take some time out for themselves.

Purpose

To enable carers to take part in self-care and to show appreciation for all that they do to support people with disabilities in Ceredigion.

Overview

The carers team put together boxes including a variety of Welsh treats such as Welsh cakes, bara brith and jam. Carers reported that receiving the box cheered them up.

Opportunities and enablers

This example shows the impact that small gestures can have for carers, who often do not take time to treat themselves.



For more information about Break in a Box:
Scan QR code with your device.

Powys: Creating Sustainable Community Capacity

Background

Wales has a strong history of community action, a tradition thrown into sharp relief during the floods and, soon afterwards, the global pandemic. In this context, WCVA and voluntary sector leaders came together with People Powered Results (NESTA) to work with community groups.

At the height of the pandemic, the local day centre was closed. Credu (Carers Support) had a desire to build on the energy and commitment of the Ystradgynlais Carers group to meet the need for more locally available support and activities for both people who are caring and people receiving care.



Purpose

To explore how voluntary organisations and statutory services can support communities to develop capacity to respond to challenges and opportunities to build a fairer, greener, healthier future.

Overview

A series of initiatives were implemented, exploring sustainable social care, including the ‘Thursday Club’, which epitomised their democratic and grassroots work.

Adult Services worked closely with Credu and NESTA in Powys to co-develop alternative day opportunities with a focus on enabling carers to have a break from their caring role, and to help carers have more opportunities to spend their days doing something of interest.

Powys: Creating Sustainable Community Capacity



Longer term impact

The carers group will explore how to build a hybrid model of support that is scalable to other areas, with additional capacity.

Groups often engage widely despite limited resources and capacity. However, for community action to play a more significant role in increasing participation, better relationships with partners and more resources will be needed to promote a wider range of local, place-based activities.

National and local government, with voluntary and statutory sectors, can support local groups to articulate the value of community action.

Challenges

- Grouping loosely connected structures were able to be agile in a crisis but this hampers strategic planning and collaboration with larger organisations longer-term.
- Lack of resource, space or time to reflect on or evaluate activities or agree a future vision, especially where members have competing aims and ambitions.

Partners



For more information

Scan QR code with your device.

Powys: Creating Sustainable Community Capacity

Opportunities and enablers

- The community-led approach drew upon asset-based community development methodology.
- Identifying practical help enabled groups to stay open and responsive to local needs.
- Trusted relationships that built confidence were highly valued.
- Consistent support enabled exploration of challenge and planning for the future.
- Voluntary and statutory partners can create space to boost capacity, build partnerships and create a shared understanding of community action.
- Support can include coaching and other levers for change such as unrestricted funding, governance or communications support.



get in touch...

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Swansea Bay: Unique respite breaks for carers



Background

With restrictions posed by Covid-19, traditional respite options became unavailable, placing additional pressure on families.

Swansea Council was keen to identify creative solutions to support families and to offer them breaks throughout the height of the pandemic.

Purpose

In the past, disabled children have had to take respite care breaks away from their families but now, thanks to the Council and Action for Children, families will be able to go on holiday together.

Overview

Swansea Council has bought three family-sized static caravans on idyllic Gower so the youngsters can take their families with them for short respite care breaks away from home. The caravans were officially opened by Cllr Louise Gibbard, Swansea Council's Cabinet Member for Care services. She said:

'Now, disabled young children and their families will be able to get a wonderful change of scene together rather than having to go on holiday separately, which has often been the case in the past. Working together with Action for Children, we've purchased the caravans near each other on a holiday site in Llanrhidian. They are fully kitted-out to make sure the children and their families get the best possible short break experience.'

Swansea Bay: Unique respite breaks for carers

Longer term impact

It is hoped that caravans can be a longterm alternative respite option for families living in the Swansea region.

Challenges

- There was a huge amount of interest and waitlists quickly developed!

Opportunities and enablers

- Caravans offer a great option for respite for young people to have short breaks with family members.

Partners

- Action for Children
- Swansea Council



get in touch...

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Children and Families

Pressures on children's services have increased since the easing of restrictions, with safeguarding concerns and complexities on the rise.

Given ongoing shortages of social workers, local authorities should consider ways of deploying other staff as safe and appropriate to support those with lower level needs.



Children and Families

Key Messages

- Due to some services for children and families being paused during the pandemic, there was additional pressure on social workers.
- Given ongoing shortages of social workers, local authorities deployed other staff, where appropriate, to support those with lower level needs.
- Waitlist and early interventions might prevent further deterioration in families that are struggling whilst they await assessment. This could reduce the complexity of cases.

Shifting the Balance of Care for Children and Young People – Cardiff



Background

Cardiff Children’s Services has a clear vision to provide families with the right support, from the right person, at the right time, in the right place and at the lowest safe level of intervention. This aims to enable children to remain with family where it is safe for them to do so. This is called ‘shifting the balance of care’ for children and young people.

Purpose

To ‘shift the balance’ in three key areas for children in Cardiff including:

- Ensuring a range of support in the community and a variety of homes for children are available in Cardiff: Place.
- Supporting a permanent workforce: People.
- Developing our practice and procedures.

Shifting the Balance of Care for Children and Young People – Cardiff



Overview

There are several projects in place:

Interventions Hub: bringing together a range of services into one team, which can be easily accessed by children and families. This prevents escalation through statutory services.

The remaining three projects focus on ensuring that families are supported with the appropriate statutory intervention and that children are supported at home where it is safe to do so.

Challenges

Several projects are ongoing, which requires appropriate project management in place to oversee the work.

Step down to Care and Support: The project has established a data set and reporting framework. Further staff have also recently been recruited to further assist with the project. The project is working through the cohort, identifying next steps for those who are placed with parents and planning case progression. There have been 108 young people who have ended up being looked after and returned home.

Interventions Hub: The Interventions Hub has launched and has received hundreds of referrals, which have required a variety of different interventions.

Shifting the Balance of Care for Children and Young People – Cardiff



Complex Case Funding Review: Work is ongoing to review all cases and ensure appropriate health and education support to enable the best outcomes for children and young people. This is delivered in a way that works to the safest but least interventionist options, and the best outcomes, for the young people.

Opportunities and enablers

This work has resulted in many young people being looked after and returned home, rather than taken into care.

get in touch...

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Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Background

The Rainbow Scheme was set up in the summer of 2020 to allow vulnerable children and those adversely affected by Covid-19 and the lockdowns, to access free places in childcare settings and supervised play schemes of the family's choice. Support was available to ensure the placement was successful.

Purpose

To allow vulnerable children, and those affected adversely by Covid-19 and the lockdowns, to access free places in childcare settings and supervised play schemes.

Overview

A multi-agency panel considered requests from professionals in a wide range of statutory and third sector agencies, who provided the necessary evidence for why the placements were needed.

The panel met weekly during summer holidays and then monthly from September 2021. Panel members included representation from Children's Services, Education, Flying Start and the Play Development Team.

A mini competition in summer 2020 invited children to submit suggestions for logos for the Rainbow Scheme. The logo, designed by Abbie, was selected and then used on all scheme documentation.

The Rainbow Scheme covers a whole spectrum of needs, just as a rainbow covers the whole spectrum of light.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Overview

Children were able to access placements if:

- They felt isolated.
- Their speech, language and communication was delayed.
- They were demonstrating signs that their socialising skills were falling behind.
- They really needed to meet friends and have fun.

Placements were also made to support family wellbeing if parents were suffering from high levels of stress and anxiety, poor mental health, relationship breakdown or illness, if relationships within the family were strained or they were in need of a break.

Multiple funding streams were used to support placements for different ages and needs of children: Emergency Childcare and Play Opportunities for Vulnerable Children funding, Child Development funding, Families First, Winter of Wellbeing and Summer of Fun, and Carers' Respite Grant.

Placements were set up by WCBC childcare staff, working in conjunction with the referrer, the parent and the setting. The placements were then monitored to ensure best use of public funds. In all, 241 placements were made for 223 children. Between July 2020 and Summer 2022, £175,177.81 has been used for placement costs and extra supporting staff.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Longer term impact

The longterm impact has been significant, especially on the increased awareness and profile of the potential of childcare among education and social care staff. Specifically, the valuable role of placements in supporting vulnerable families, providing respite, stabilising placements at home, supporting child development and child and family wellbeing, has been recognised.

In addition, the scheme has highlighted the wider success achieved (by many teams) under very challenging, even crisis conditions. Staff were motivated, completely committed to making a difference for children and families in Wrexham, prepared to go above and beyond

what is usually required, and ready to work in different ways and with different partners, to achieve the goals of the scheme. One staff member started three weeks before lockdown and another just after, but nevertheless played a key part in the creation of the high morale and positive work ethic that underpinned the scheme's success.

The scheme underlined the potential of funded childcare as a 'hook' or portal through which to engage with more vulnerable families and to be able to offer further holistic preventative and Early Help support. Many families were helped in this way during the pandemic, which for some, was a particularly challenging time.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Lastly, the ‘Dunkirk spirit’ adopted by the team during the crisis resulted in:

- Much closer working and breakdowns of silo working, which has since been maintained and extended.
- A much more innovative and creative approach to job roles, and a more adventurous attitude to learning opportunities.
- Greater resilience, adaptability and flexibility than initially recognised, resulting in a real pride in what has been achieved through The Rainbow Scheme and other projects run by the team during the pandemic. Everyone went above and beyond their role and there was much celebration of this.



Challenges

- Short-term funding, differing guidance and tight turn-around times for submission of delivery plans and monitoring for grants from Welsh Government .
- Limited capacity during Covid-19 and challenges in recruitment and retention whilst teams were working at home.
- Supporting staff who were 100% working from home, especially if their wellbeing was suffering as a result of lockdown restrictions. Many were also homeschooling children, isolated from family help and unable to access the kinds of things that would normally support their own wellbeing.
- The number and type of settings that were open in the early stages, although this relaxed as time passed and other settings re-opened.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Opportunities and enablers

- Co-location of the Children's Services commissioners (managing the grants), the Childcare team (liaising with settings/linked in with Play and Education), the Family Information Service (working with vulnerable families / linked in with social care teams) and business support / administrators. In response to the apparent needs, increasing risks and the available funding, the team worked together, scoped ideas, planned and designed, and the scheme was approved and put in place relatively quickly.
- The pre-existing multi-agency childcare panel system to allocate funding for childcare placements: the Disability Respite and Childcare panel. This enabled the team to

adapt processes, paperwork and monitoring to set up The Rainbow Scheme relatively easily. Administrators, who were already experienced in supporting panels, could also help set up, run and monitor the Rainbow panels.

- Having a vibrant and stable childcare sector in Wrexham. A good number of private day nurseries and childminders in the early days and then other provisions later on meant that there were sufficient quality, registered settings to be able to accommodate placements close to home.
- Access to a number of additional temporary grants, which could support the scheme.

*'The children have had a great experience.
The scheme helped parents with some respite.'*

(Cool Kids Club)

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Opportunities and enablers continued

- Good support from senior managers who were forward-thinking, innovative and enthusiastic.
- Existing good joint working arrangements with education, social work teams and with early help providers enabled the team to establish referral pathways swiftly and effectively.

‘The Rainbow Scheme is a good programme as it helps the vulnerable children and their families.’

(Little Scholars)

- Prior to The Rainbow Scheme, a very successful C-CAS scheme had already been set up, i.e. Welsh Government-funded childcare for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. This scheme became an exemplar of learning for how to:
 - Bring in and manage staff capacity from other teams in a crisis.
 - Set schemes up swiftly and have them approved quickly.
 - Process large volumes of payments accurately.
 - Set up sophisticated monitoring schemes to monitor multiple placements in settings.
 - Make the invoicing arrangements straightforward for settings.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Key learning

- An increased awareness across all sectors of the potential of funded childcare placements to support families.
- Placement support and stability under Special Guardianship and Fostering arrangements.
- The importance of supporting family wellbeing where parents are on low incomes, need a break and are at the end of their tether.
- The impact of the Scheme on child development where delays have been observed.
- The needs of the parent impacting on the child and the need for a different environment from time to time to help develop skills and confidence.



In addition, the team have reviewed their various childcare placement schemes and have developed a strategic approach to consolidating how they work. This means that they are:

- Clearer about the potential of childcare to support families.
- Even more passionate about the need to raise the profile of childcare as a valued and key profession.
- Bringing all childcare placement schemes under the 'Rainbow' umbrella to make them easier to access and administer and also easier to access holistic support.

Finally, The Rainbow Scheme demonstrates how people can rise to a challenge – most importantly, together. Relationships built at that time are strong and supportive. Families who needed support continue to be supported, where needed.

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



'I am very happy to have had the funding. It gave us the respite we needed as life can be difficult. This was a blessing that this funding was on offer to keep stability and routine.'

(Parent, Jumping Jacks Holiday Club)

'I had a brilliant time and made lots of new friends.'

(Child, Jumping Jacks Holiday Club)

'The outcome of the respite placement was a positive one. The parents conveyed they had been wanting suitable care for a long time and were able to spend their respite for work and other things. There were no incidents or areas of concern to report. H enjoyed a variety of indoor and outdoor sensory activities with equipment I purchased funded by the local authority, including trips to parks with other children and also via wheelchair access transport. His health and disability needs were understood due to my experience and training competencies. It would be lovely to see him back.'

(Ty Gav)

[Wrexham Council's 'At the End of the Rainbow' scheme ensuring no child goes hungry: The Leader \(leaderlive.co.uk\)](https://www.leaderlive.co.uk)

Wrexham: The Rainbow Scheme



Partners

The scheme was set up and administered by a task and finish group from the Prevention and Service Development (PSD) Service in Wrexham, which included representation from the Wrexham Family Information Service, the Childcare team and the commissioning staff in the Service Development team. The operational lead was the WFIS manager and the management lead was the PSD manager.

Other partners included Flying Start, Funded Early Education staff, the Play Development staff, Education ALN staff, childcare settings, play scheme providers and a huge range of referring agencies including schools, health visitors, family support organisations, social workers, and childcare settings.

get in touch...

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Neath Port Talbot: HOPE Girls' Rights Group



Background

Established in 2020, HOPE is a group of care-experienced girls from the Neath Port Talbot area. The group consists of around ten girls, between the ages of 12 and 18, who come together to champion girls' rights.

Purpose

To bring together girls with experience of being in care to talk about issues that matter to them.

Overview

Supported by Neath Port Talbot Council and Neath Port Talbot Children's Rights Unit staff, members are encouraged and supported to raise issues that are important to them. They are passionate about improving their own emotional health and wellbeing, as well as tackling issues that girls coming into care may face.

The girls meet fortnightly to socialise, take part in fun activities to build their confidence, and have their voices heard on their experiences of being in care. They also highlight issues they would like to champion, e.g. period dignity and the right to exercise safely.

Neath Port Talbot: HOPE Girls' Rights Group



Through their endeavours, and working with professionals who can make a difference, HOPE wanted to ensure that young girls entering the care system would be provided with the basic toiletries they need. Accompanied by a heartfelt message from HOPE, social workers and foster carers will now work together to make this happen.

HOPE have developed a postcard with these messages, which has been delivered to every foster carer in NPT. They are currently creating an animated video to be used in training foster carers, giving this project longevity.

The group are also working to raise awareness of safe spaces for girls. Initial consultation has highlighted the need to educate men and boys and build confidence

and self-esteem through workshops and activities for girls, including self-defence. A scheme to highlight safe businesses that girls could stay in in the event of feeling unsafe has also been initiated.

HOPE has received recognition and won awards from the High Sheriff of West Glamorgan and NPTCVS Volunteer Awards for their work.

Longer term impact

Hope is a long-term project that will continue for the foreseeable future.



For more information:

Scan QR code with your device. 'Meet HOPE, the girls' rights group empowering young women in Neath Port Talbot - South West Wales Connected'

Neath Port Talbot: HOPE Girls' Rights Group



Challenges

- Transporting young people to groups, events and opportunities remains a barrier.
- Engaging young people: mental health and wellbeing issues amongst young people creates barriers to participation.

Opportunities and enablers

- Providing fun opportunities to build trusting relationships.
- Creating a platform for children and young people to have a voice.
- Active young citizen engagement: listening and acting upon suggestions and feedback.

Partners

- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Children's Rights Unit Neath

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Workforce



Recruitment and retention was, and continues to be, one of the biggest challenges in social care.

Wellbeing also emerged as one of the most important factors, with morale badly affected by ongoing shortages and pressures associated with delivering services in the current economic climate.



Workforce

Key Messages

- The workforce is exhausted due to high caseloads and low staffing levels, extra hours and constant change during the pandemic.
- Recruitment and retention is a major challenge.
- Valuing staff, opportunities for permanent employment, fair pay and conditions and a sense of team working and support are key issues. Staff on temporary contracts with low pay feel undervalued and are less likely to remain in post, particularly as costs of living rise.
- Staff retention schemes and wellbeing initiatives are essential, alongside financial support.
- Regular supervision and reflection, training opportunities and regular communication were noted as essential by the frontline workforce.
- There were mixed views on home working and there are differences between NHS and social care policies.
- It is important that practitioners have protected time for development and rest breaks, as well as flexible working hours, to improve retention and wellbeing.
- Upfront fuel payments are a major factor for carers struggling to meet bills.
- When there was a robust induction in place for new staff, this reduced burden on social workers to onboard new starters and increased quality of work.

Vale of Glamorgan: Wellbeing Champions Group



Background

The Wellbeing Champions group developed in response to training around mental health stigma provided by Time to Change Wales. An action plan was developed and those interested were invited to form a steering group to discuss wellbeing support in social services, and to identify areas to work on as a group to support staff.

Purpose

The group was established to consider wellbeing support to staff working in social services.

Overview

Events were planned in line with national calendar events (e.g. Stress Awareness Week) to raise awareness of different areas of wellbeing such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, stress etc. These were supported by information and digital communication.

The group met virtually throughout the pandemic and found ways to communicate and develop ideas for future events and activities.

Wellbeing sessions in the local area take place monthly so that champions and staff can participate in physical activity that also benefits the local community.

Vale of Glamorgan: Wellbeing Champions Group



Longer term impact

The Champions have been working as a group since 2019, and membership continues to increase, particularly now that hybrid working has become the normal way of working. Wellbeing sessions have increased in frequency and are now held monthly, and wellbeing champions meet on an authority-wide basis, chaired by social services staff.

Challenges

- Lack of awareness of the work of the champions: recent research identified that some staff found information hard to locate on the staffnet.
- Difficulty in reaching frontline staff so that they can benefit from the activities: the team is keen to build and maintain interest and encourage membership.

Opportunities and enablers

- High level of support from senior management: it is important this continues.
- Good working relationship with colleagues across the authority and within social services.
- Opportunities to work together with staff on wellbeing initiatives and create ongoing rapport.
- Staff feeling supported in their own teams and recognising a supportive culture.
- Regular updates and good quality communication and engagement from the wellbeing champions has encouraged participation and the group has grown as a result.

Vale of Glamorgan: Wellbeing Champions Group



Workforce



Prevention
and Wellbeing

What do employees need?

Autonomy and
empowerment

Participation

Effective
leadership

Trust and
transparency

Engagement

Relationships between leaders and
their employees

Flexibility in
work roles

Partners

- Healthy Living Team
- Head of Human Resources
- Communications Team

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ADSS Cymru
Yn arwain Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol yng Nghymru
Leading Social Services in Wales

Denbighshire: Internal Redeployment and Volunteer Bureau



Background

This project was created as a result of the loss of approximately 33% of internal frontline carers during the initial lockdown.

Purpose

To enable flexible, responsive provision of care and support.

Overview

A redeployment bureau was established for staff who had been stood down from other roles due to lockdown and a contemporaneous appeal was made for volunteers from outside of Denbighshire.

People were matched to care services based on their experience and the tasks they felt comfortable to complete.

An online induction training package was developed for completion by the individual and DBS checks were undertaken.

A core team of internal staff was created to provide immediate response to external providers experiencing staff shortages due to outbreak of Covid-19.

Denbighshire: Internal Redeployment and Volunteer Bureau



Examples of success

- One volunteer worked in particular care settings for over 12 months, supporting tenants with shopping and prescription collection, meal deliveries and companionship.
- A mother and daughter, who had both been cleaners in a school, worked in the in-house care home for 12 months, and have since remained on the relief pool for this care home. Their energy and motivation during their time in the home helped the staff immensely.
- A DCC (housing) employee volunteered in the care home where his mother, who had dementia, resided. His role was mainly cleaning, but he did get the chance to play Santa on Christmas Day, which was a very special moment indeed as his mum exclaimed, 'I never knew my son was Santa!'

Rhondda Cynon Taf: Ambassadors Project



Background

The Ambassadors Project in Cwm Taf began just before the pandemic when many projects were delayed. Thirty ambassadors, recruited prior to the pandemic, supported the local authority through online events for schools and colleges.

Purpose

To work with job centres, schools and colleges to promote social care and encourage applicants into the workforce.

Overview

Once restrictions were lifted to allow open air meetings, Ambassadors were filmed talking about their jobs and their journey.

In addition, a 'catalogue' of Ambassadors was developed. This document is distributed to schools who are then able to ask for specific Ambassadors to visit and talk. Visits may link either to the interest of the class or what works with the curriculum.

Longer term impact

Since the height of the pandemic, there have been more challenges as services deal with the significant recruitment and retention of people into social care roles, and the local authority continues to work hard to attract people of all ages into social care.

Rhondda Cynon Taf: Ambassadors Project



Challenges

- Social care is often not seen as a career option with clear development pathways
- People often have one idea of what social care is.
- Social care is not as visible as other sectors
- Social care is not seen as as important as other jobs and the range of jobs (circa 300) are mostly unknown
- There is a need for more people to work in social care and that need will increase with an ageing population

Opportunities and enablers

- Workshops are hosted in job centres. As knowledge of the WeCare work increases, the workshops aim to inspire people to come into the sector.
- Ambassadors are recruited from across services to help bring the range of 300 roles to life. Now, 34 Ambassadors are supporting the project, from mental health, learning disabilities, respite care, edge of care, elderly and fostering.
- Experiential learning is used to promote understanding and empathy: e.g. sight impairment replication activities (using glasses that simulate sight impairments) so that people can experience the effects on daily living.
- Micro jobs fairs are being co-produced with job centres and other teams, inviting providers where the sector is most hard-pressed.

Rhondda Cynon Taf: Ambassadors Project



Opportunities and enablers continued

- Ambassadors visit schools and colleges to talk about their role.
- Working with schools to support mock interviews and career carousels give opportunities to raise the profile of social care.
- Working with the internal Education, Employment and Training team and Careers Wales gives the opportunity to meet with younger students who may be considering their career options.
- All work with schools, colleges and those looking for work includes activities which promote the values that are essential in the social care workforce, such as creativity and empathy.
- Taster days are currently being piloted to enable young people to visit the training centre and experience the challenges and highlights of working in the sector.
- Future aspirations include working with primary schools to promote core values such as empathy, kindness and working together, through storytelling and activities.

Partners

- Job centres
- Schools
- Colleges

get in
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Recruitment and Retention Efforts across Local Authorities



Background

One of the major challenges reported during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic was maintaining staffing levels to meet demand and ensure adequate care provision, due to staff sickness, shielding and turnover rates.

Local authorities employed a wide variety of approaches to attracting people to careers in social care.

One practice bubble participant commented:

‘There are not enough carers to cover care packages, and waiting lists and use of agency staff have left staff feeling exhausted and demoralised.’

Overview

Approaches to attracting people into working in social care across local authorities have included:

- Job fairs.
- Using social media such as video content on YouTube and targeted advertising.
- Visits to schools.
- Offers of funded training.
- Branded vehicles and billboards.
- Radio and TV adverts.
- Fast-tracking application processes.
- Enhanced pay for unsocial hours.
- Vouchers.
- Payment of Social Care Wales registration fees.

Recruitment and Retention Efforts across Local Authorities



Longer term impact

It is hoped that the wide range of activities targeting increased recruitment will result in a better pipeline of employees.



Challenges

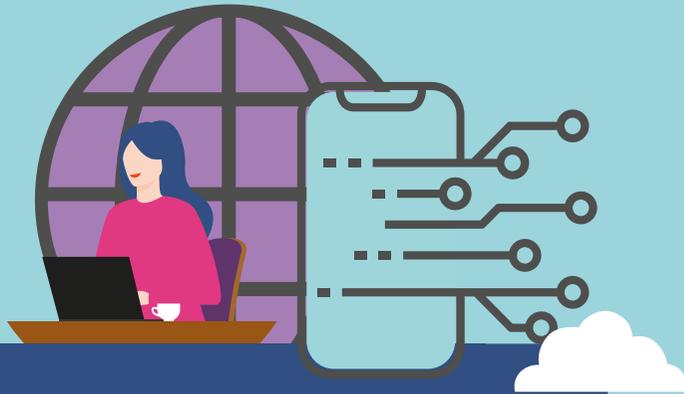
- As recruitment challenges are a UK-wide problem, all local authorities are competing to recruit a small pool of individuals.
- Finding carers with a driver's licence.
- Use of an external provider to source agency staff. They were new to systems in the locality and slow to start.
- Rurality and the logistics of getting to see clients.
- Length of support required for candidates to access opportunities, and adapting training to meet employer requirements.

Recruitment and Retention Efforts across Local Authorities



Opportunities and enablers

- Many local authorities introduced flexible working practices and redeployed staff to critical areas to maximise coverage across services and teams.
- Going to where people are, rather than expecting them to come to organisations, had positive results.
- Setting up a designated recruitment and retention board to monitor activities, chaired by the Director, was helpful in one area.
- Identifying a project officer to help with managing flow and support new fast track process.
- New recruitment IT system will free up admin time to help recruiting officers.
- Relationship management and good communication with providers is key to flexibility and responding to pressures. A consistent approach, both locally and regionally, is also important.



Work with Care Providers



Local authorities invested a lot of time, resources and effort into improved collaboration and communication with care providers. This strengthened relationships and is continuing in many regions.

Local authorities should consider longer term ways of maintaining both relationships and resource allocation across the care sector, using agency staff, redeployment and regular communication channels to maintain services in times of fluctuation.



**Work with
Care Providers**

Key Messages

- Local authorities were able to strengthen relationships with care providers.
- Grant monies supported the continuation of business functions as much as possible, while flexible working arrangements and the redeployment of staff were helpful to ‘plug the gaps’.
- Local authorities should consider future proofing flexible arrangements across the sector.
- Many regions reflect improved relationships with care providers.
- At least one local authority has decided to retain a pot of emergency grant monies on an ongoing basis.

Neath Port Talbot: British Sign Language (BSL) Emergency Services

Background

This project was created as a result of consultation with Ysgol Maes Y Coed, where it was evident that many students had had negative experiences in emergency situations.

Purpose

To improve communication skills between frontline emergency service staff and children and young people with complex needs.



Overview

A video has been created to teach basic BSL that may be pertinent in an emergency. The video has been developed through collaborative working with multiple partners and the children and young people.

The video will be shared with the emergency services and incorporated into their training and / or induction programmes. It will also be shared with staff in order to improve communication methods with some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Longer term impact

The video will be used to educate frontline staff.

Neath Port Talbot: British Sign Language (BSL) Emergency Services



Challenges

Ensuring there was enough time and resource to complete the work.

Opportunities and enablers

- Improving communication with vulnerable groups.
- Improving equality and inclusion through giving a voice to children and young people with disabilities.

Partners

- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board
- Children's Rights Unit Neath
- South Wales Police
- Mid And West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Welsh Ambulance
- Ysgol Maes Y Coed

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Support to Commissioned Care Providers across Local Authorities



Background

There is a very close partnership between local authorities and their commissioned care providers such as care homes and domiciliary care providers. Local authorities undertook a number of activities to support care providers during the pandemic.

Purpose

To ensure that care providers were able to sustain services throughout the pandemic.

Overview

There was a wide range of ways in which local authorities supported care providers, including:

- Specialist training
- Sharing staffing resources and redeployment
- Meeting regularly to manage capacity and share concerns and ideas
- Sharing resources such as equipment
- Keeping a pot of emergency resources
- Shared recruitment activities

Longer term impact

Some local authorities have reported stronger relationships with care providers and have kept routine meetings and joint approaches beyond the pandemic.

Support to Commissioned Care Providers across Local Authorities

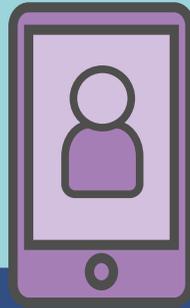


Challenges

- Care agencies having enough capacity to participate in training opportunities.
- Shared challenges around restrictions and staffing capacity.

Opportunities and enablers

- Maintaining both relationships and resource allocation across the care sector by using agency staff, redeployment and regular communication channels to maintain services in times of fluctuation.
- Training provided to care home staff enabled some care homes to register in a higher category, in order to accept people with higher levels of complex need.



Digital and Communications



Local authorities rapidly adapted to changes to technology.

Innovations included the expansion of telecare, using equipment to prevent deterioration at home, such as fall sensors, Co2 monitors etc.

Communications activities can help to raise the positive public profile of social care and encourage people into careers.



Digital and Communications

Key Messages

- Online options were preferred by many but made digital exclusion worse for those less comfortable with it.
- Video conferencing has great advantages to reduce the need for travel and offer care close to home.
- There are some drawbacks including missing vital risk information that might be seen in face-to-face visits.
- Staff missed the more personal and social interactions with their colleagues such as making cups of tea or eating lunch together.
- Having a choice or hybrid methods of engagement was cited by citizens and staff as the best way forward, with home visits for those most at work.
- Many local authorities used smart technology in new ways to support independence at home and to avoid hospital admission.
- Innovations such as robot pets offered comfort for people isolated due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Virtual Reality Project: Swansea Local Authority and Partners



Background

Swansea Council are working in partnership with Digital Communities Wales, the Discovery volunteer project, Macmillan, Consultant, Ty Olwen, and professionals from across Pembrokeshire and North Wales. They have come together to develop a bespoke immersive VR experience to enhance the lives of individuals.

People are at the heart of the pilot, and their individual wishes are what drives each bespoke digital experience.

Purpose

The project initially started with the goal of bringing a final wish to those reaching the end of their lives through a fully immersive VR experience.

It then extended to support people experiencing loneliness and isolation to participate in virtual social activities.

Virtual Reality Project: Swansea Local Authority and Partners



Overview

The purpose of the project was to film bespoke experiences following an individual's wishes. This could be their favourite place, which they would like to visit one last time. The film will be accompanied by meaningful sounds and music, with the aim to reach all the senses.

Everyone will have a unique memory, so it is important that we capture the whole experience in a very personal and meaningful way.

Over the past few years, we have been collating individuals' wishes and personal outcomes as they near the end of their lives.

We have captured individuals' stories and what matters to them right up to their end of life, as well as their wishes for after death, via the living well and advance care plan. Equipment such as VR headsets and 'magic table' projection methods are used.

This digital innovation has been expanded to people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or a combination of special needs. This includes: people with mental health difficulties, or sensory loss, older people and those living with dementia, with improvements in engagement, physical movement, sensory stimulation, social well-being, and a reduction in anxiety and distress and increased happiness, confidence and/or self-esteem.

Virtual Reality Project: Swansea Local Authority and Partners



Challenges

- Ensuring that an individual's vision is being captured.

Opportunities and enablers

Lorraine, the Manager of Birchgrove Special Needs Service, commented:

'We were lucky to be part of this project. The magic table is an exciting product that can open a world of wonder for people who use the service. This piece of equipment has brought a lot of pleasure and fun when people are using it. The 360 projector stimulates movement and improves wellbeing and concentration, and people are amazed how interactive the table is, from popping balloons, watching hot air balloons pass by on the ceiling to watching the waves roll around your feet and fish swim across your hands.'

get in touch...

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Partners

- Swansea Council
- Digital Communities Wales
- The Discovery Volunteer project
- Macmillan

Powys: Working with Robotic Pets



Background

Robotic pets were supplied to support individuals in the community, at home and in care homes, to improve general wellbeing and enhance their ability to take more control of their lives at home.

Purpose



To ascertain the benefits of using robotic pets in the care of dementia, and end of life patients.

Overview

Robotic cats were purchased at a cost of £100 each. The robotic pets are designed to look, feel and sound like a real cat, with built-in sensors responding to petting, hugging and motion.

Longer term impact

Initially the robotic pets were introduced as part of a pilot study. They are now a mainstream offering via the Community Equipment Service.

Challenges

- Finance
- Frontline capacity during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic

Powys: Working with Robotic Pets



Feedback from a client's husband:

'My wife was palliative; the children wanted an animal, however, there was no way we had the time or resources to welcome a pet into the house. My wife had help from an Occupational Therapist who thought that it might be a good idea to try the robotic cat. The cat was delivered and instantly we all bonded with the cat, the children loved playing with it as did we adults. It really brought us together as a family in very hard times. We all had lots of fun with the cat and it was utilized in many ways, such as talking to the children about their mum's next stage as she became near the end. The cat become our family pet, without the hassle of what usual pets bring.

Since my wife has passed away, we asked to keep the robotic cat. I can't imagine life without it, it has provided me comfort and I have talked to this cat each night, I feel close to my wife when I'm with the cat and the children do too. The cat has been a great tool for supporting us all as a whole.'

Powys: Working with Robotic Pets



Opportunities and enablers

- Logistical provision of Technology Enabled Care products available through the Integrated Community Equipment Service.
- Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund.
- Senior Management commitment to TEC and Robotics.

Partners

- Powys County Council
- Domiciliary care and care home agencies



For more information:

Scan QR code with your device.

Video available to watch here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/12691/Robotic-Cat>

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Denbighshire: Use of Technology by and with People with Learning Disabilities in Day Activity Settings



Background

This project explored a range of opportunities to support people with learning disabilities in using technology in day activity settings.

Purpose

To understand how technology could better support and empower people with learning disabilities to connect and participate in work and social activities.

Overview

Use of technology by and with people with learning disabilities in day activity settings, at home and for self-advocacy.

For example:

- Purchase of the owl 360degree camera and large screen for a small day activity service for people with very complex needs. The team still use the camera, which enables people at home to link in to their day activities remotely. It is also possible to link two smaller groups in separate rooms so that they can have a larger group activity together (e.g. picture bingo).
- Provision of iPads in supported living: a large proportion of people with learning disabilities living in supported living accommodation use iPads regularly now. They use the iPads to link in remotely for their PCP reviews and other meetings (e.g. self-advocacy). Some now use their iPad to connect with family and friends by using Facetime. These are examples that hadn't been happening pre-Covid-19. For people with communication difficulties who, for example, need to use visual signs (such as Makaton) to communicate, this is life-changing.

Denbighshire: Use of Technology by and with People with Learning Disabilities in Day Activity Settings



Overview continued

- Day and work opportunities: Popty Bakery invested in cameras and lighting and created a YouTube channel, so that the citizens could produce their own online cooking videos for other citizens (who were self-isolating) to view. The longterm aim is to provide a library of online content created by citizens, which would include self-made films to help their peers with learning life skills.
- Greater use of WhatsApp and tailored apps for people with learning disabilities to share updates, videos and photos to help track progress for reviews.
- Other innovations included the purchase and use of VR headsets and 360 GoPro cameras, which allowed visits and local excursions to be filmed. This helped with community orientation and creating fresh content. This is in recognition of a lack of local content. In the future, there are plans to take requests from older people with dementia to tailor local films to help capture people's memories (as part of work around memory and reminiscence). The technology works on an app : the link can be sent to the care home and used on a VR headset.

Denbighshire: Use of Technology by and with People with Learning Disabilities in Day Activity Settings



Longer term impact

- Technology can be empowering for people with learning disabilities. More people with learning disabilities are now using technology to keep in touch and to take part in activities, conferences and meetings.
- Carers and staff are more confident about the person they care for having access to the internet and using online technology. Support from the people around is vital: carers (paid and unpaid) can make a significant difference.
- Technology is used in a wider range of settings and circumstances. People with learning disabilities (including those with severe learning disabilities) can benefit from the use of technology. Some even prefer online communication to face-to-face interaction.
- Some equipment and apps etc. continue to be used beyond the height of Covid-19.
- Small groups of people with learning disabilities can be remotely connected to enjoy larger group virtual activities.
- People in supported living are more connected to their families and friends.
- Technology is helping to reduce social isolation in rural areas. Geography and rurality is less of a barrier than it was pre-Covid-19 .

Denbighshire: Use of Technology by and with People with Learning Disabilities in Day Activity Settings



Challenges

- Approaches to risk: some carers and staff were so concerned about the risks associated with online activity that it prevented access to activities.
- Reluctance to embrace technology: some carers and staff were reluctant to support people to try out new technology or didn't know how to use technology themselves.
- Pre-conceptions: some carers and staff found it difficult to envisage people with learning disabilities being able to benefit from online activities and communication.
- Connectivity (WiFi): some people with learning difficulties didn't have access to WiFi.
- Covid-19 isolation social distancing rules made it difficult to show people with learning disabilities how to make best use of technology.

- Mental capacity: some people with learning disabilities needed repeated and intensive tailored support and encouragement because of their mental capacity.

Opportunities and enablers

- Regional learning disability transformation leads.
- ICF funding (for purchase of technology and funding for staff capacity).
- Local authorities' willingness to pilot new technology and initiatives.
- Covid-19 funding (for purchase of new equipment for pilots).
- Key staff and providers encouraging and supporting people with learning disabilities.

Denbighshire: Use of Technology by and with People with Learning Disabilities in Day Activity Settings



Partners

- Citizens and their carers
- Local authority staff
- Learning disability transformation team
- Social enterprise providers and voluntary sector providers
- Independent sector providers
- In house provider team
- Welsh Government (funding)

get in
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Communications: Raising the Profile of Social Care

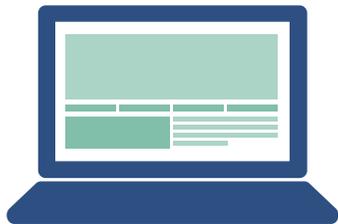


Background

The pandemic brought about many changes to the way services operated and people interacted with one another. For some, who had not been using technology previously, the sudden shift to using new technology was difficult.

Purpose

To support local residents to become digitally literate.



Overview

Several local authorities initiated 'digital champion' groups, either directly running drop-in sessions, supporting people over the telephone or by text, or meeting in-person. Some local authorities commissioned voluntary sector groups to undertake the same function. Generally, these were well-attended sessions and were welcomed by the public.

Longer term impact

- Improved digital literacy in the community.
- Long lasting friendships and social connections.

Communications: Raising the Profile of Social Care



Challenges

- Communication with target audiences (i.e. those that are not comfortable on computers) required more traditional means of advertising the scheme, such as writing letters to prospective individuals and leafleting.

Opportunities and enablers

- The tech support group was very successful in supporting people with developing basic digital skills.
- One unanticipated positive impact was that those who took part developed friendships, and the group has continued now as a social network.
- Many people who took part have since gone on to become peer supporters, sharing their experiences with others.

Partners

- Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Volunteers

'I feel that the public only get to hear about social care when things have gone wrong, and that there is a huge blame culture around this, which is supported by media. Pay rises for the health service are big news and supported by the public, but social care always feels like the poor relation.'

Communications: Raising the Profile of Social Care



Ideas to raise the profile of social care included:

- Branding vehicles and billboards.
 - Videos of social care workers talking about the profession.
 - Campaign and advertorial suggestions, including stories that told the family journey where social care is making a meaningful difference, where the life of a family has been turned around.
 - Community connectors and engagement officers were employed to facilitate dialogue with the public.
- One region held ‘what matters’ conversations using motivational interviewing techniques to learn about public views.
 - One region facilitated a family advice line for members of the public.
 - Keeping an up-to-date ‘road map’ on social media and the local authority website for the public to monitor changes to the service and where to get help, as well as outreach activities in the community.



Wellbeing resources for employees

One of the key messages coming out from our engagement with frontline staff and managers was the impact the pandemic has had on individuals, emotionally, physically and psychologically. People spoke about feeling exhausted, underappreciated, and feeling that the public did not know what it was really like to be working in social care in the pandemic. People shared that they felt the pace continues to be relentless, with increased referral rates, complexity of needs, reduced staffing levels and the cost of living crisis.

Despite these significant pressures and challenges, people also spoke about the strength they drew from the support of colleagues and teammates, how they felt inspired by communities pulling together, and how they remained committed to supporting others and doing the best possible job looking after the public.

It is important that everyone takes some time to reflect on the pandemic and what it has meant – for the public sector, for our ways of living and working, and for ourselves.

Wellbeing resources for employees

On the right are a few resources and links that will support staff to consider their own wellbeing.

ADSS Cymru would like to thank the many people who participated in our review of local authorities during Covid-19, and in putting together this compendium of good practice. The public sector and partners have achieved an immense amount in a short and pressured period of time, and for that they should feel very proud.

We hope that these ideas and resources are useful and that this supports better joint working across local authorities and ongoing innovation.



canopi.nhs.wales



silvercloudhealth.com



moneyhelper.org.uk



callhelpline.org.uk



socialcare.wales



culturalcwtsh.wales



themindfulnessinitiative.org

How I am feeling?

- I'm feeling low, stressed, irritable or anxious.
- I'm not sleeping well.
- I'm not coping.
- I can't concentrate.
- I'm not getting on with people.



- I'm struggling to keep emotions under control.
- I can't stop crying or control my anger.
- I can't face being around other people.
- I'm behaving out of character.
- I'm making really impulsive decisions.



- Obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviours are seriously interfering with everyday life.
- I am struggling to know what is real.
- I hear voices inside my head.
- I see things I don't think other people see.
- I am seriously considering suicide.
- Thoughts of food, alcohol, drugs, gambling, weight or similar are all I can think about.



What might help me?

- Talk to my line manager (if I feel I can) or another member of the management team.
 - Look at my organisation's health and wellbeing intranet pages.
 - Refer myself to Occupational Health.
 - Access counselling and psychological support.
-
- Talk to my line manager about the possibility of modifying my duties to help me cope.
 - Talk to my GP.
 - If I have been seen by a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), contact them directly.
 - Look at my organisation's health and wellbeing intranet pages.
 - Refer myself to Occupational Health.
 - Access counselling and psychological support.
-
- Talk to my manager about whether I am well enough to be in work and / or possibly modifying my duties.
 - Talk to my GP urgently.
 - If I have been seen by a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) before, contact them urgently.

HELP NOW

CALL listening service 0800 132 737

Health for Health Professional 0800 058 2738

**We encourage you to continue sharing good practice
and innovation. Please send case studies
to ADSS Cymru at our email address:**

contact@adss.cymru



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