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**COVID-19 - Community
Assets and Recovery
March 2021**

Welcome

Welcome to the March e-bulletin which this month focuses on COVID-19, community assets and building social capital. We have seen throughout the pandemic public, third and private sector agencies working together even more closely with the local communities they serve to maximise collective assets. In addition, as we have adapted to social distancing measures establishing virtual communities has become increasingly important to connect people. As we move towards recovery harnessing community assets will play a significant role in building back better.

We recently hosted a webinar entitled 'Taking Action Locally – Increasing Community Cohesion in a South Wales Community' which was delivered by Stepheni Keys, Community Development Researcher within Public Health Wales and Ceri Meloy, Head of Business at Tai Pawb. The webinar can be viewed on the past events pages of our [website](#).

We would love to hear about any additional information, case studies or tips to share with the wider public health community in Wales in future e-bulletins and our website so please get in touch with us at: publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk

Contact us

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COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

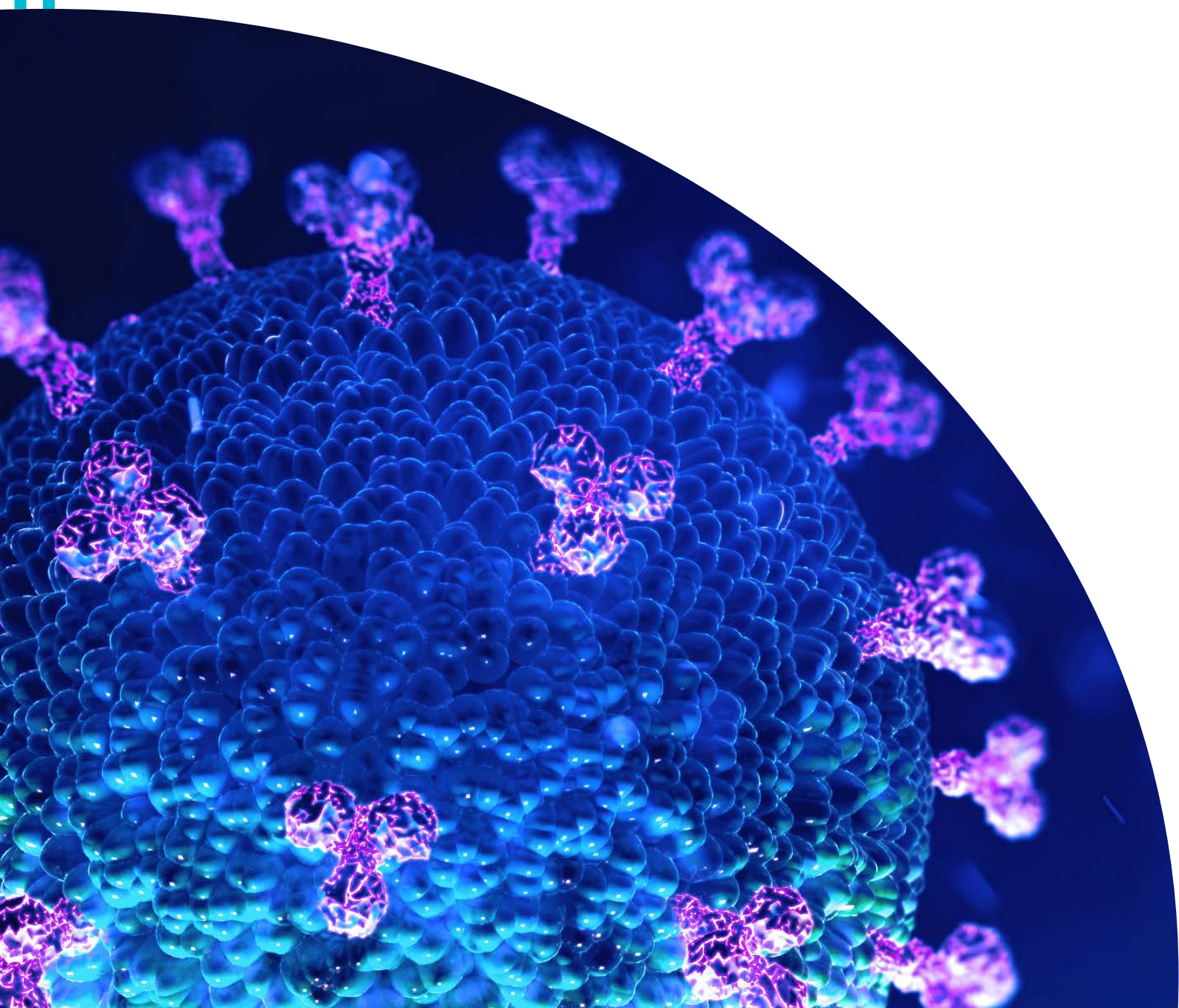
Latest information on Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Public Health Wales is working closely with the Welsh Government and the other UK public health agencies to carefully monitor the situation and implement our planned response, with measures in place to protect the health of the public.

The guidance on the measures needed in response to Coronavirus changes rapidly. It's worth always checking the [latest information from Public Health Wales](#). The pages include a wide range of comprehensive information for public and professionals.

You can find links to a wide range of sources on Public Health Network Cymru's Coronavirus (COVID-19) page [here](#).

Public Health Network Cymru welcomes feedback on this selection, and suggestions for additional sources that may be of interest to the public health community in Wales.



Headlines

Building social capital whilst social distancing

The 'Community Assets, Participation & Integration: Taking Action Locally' (CAPITAL) project is part of the Health Foundation's 'Taking action on the social determinants of health' programme. This programme aims to fund projects that demonstrate the potential for improving health by taking action on a range of social determinants, in line with the objective of the Healthy Lives strategy to mobilise cross sector action on the social determinants of health at a national and local level. The CAPITAL project commenced in April 2019 and is managed by Public Health Wales in partnership with Tai Pawb and the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership. The CAPITAL project focuses on building social capital as a determinant of health and well-being, through bringing together and empowering two groups perceived as being at a higher risk of being socially excluded within the community – social housing tenants and people seeking sanctuary (asylum seekers and refugees).

Asylum seekers, refugees and social housing

tenants are groups who suffer from the 'burden' discourse and are therefore often disengaged from the development of their local community. They are often painted as passive recipients of welfare and their resources, resilience and capacity for self-care are not acknowledged (Levitas, 2006). Not recognising and realising the assets of different elements of the community risks entrenching higher levels of isolation and weaker social networks, negatively impacting integration. The CAPITAL project works on bringing people from different backgrounds in a community together, to take part in an asset-based community development (ABCD) project in Morrison, Swansea. To facilitate integration, build stronger relationships and address social contributors to poor health and well-being, such as loneliness and isolation. It aims to build and strengthen community connections such as social bonds (bonds between people in their circle of friends, clubs or groups), social bridges (that connect people to other communities or groups to get new ideas or information), and social



links (with those with power to influence change) collectively known as 'social capital'. Removing barriers to social capital and community engagement is likely to help address the association between poor health and poor social capital, and break the cycle of deprivation and aid stronger communities.

Asylum seekers might be new to an area, live there for short or long periods depending on how long the Home Office takes to decide on their case, or if the property becomes unavailable and they have to be moved. Housing is allocated under the Home Office dispersal system, on a 'no choice' basis and depending on where there is the availability of a property. Other social determinants of health are influenced by non-devolved immigration policy, meaning that at a devolved (Wales) level, the Welsh Government does not have the power to change it, because policy/action is controlled at a UK level. For example, while an asylum claim is being determined, asylum seekers do not have the right to work and do not qualify for mainstream benefits. Instead, they receive £37.75 per person per week in asylum support. This policy renders them out of scope for any work that seeks to improve employment rates with the subsequent impact on health outcomes.

Asylum seekers experience an uncertainty about how long they might stay in one area and once a decision on their asylum claim has been reached, they have 28 days to 'move on' to alternative accommodation. People seeking sanctuary commonly report the asylum process itself as being detrimental to their health and well-being, particularly mental health (Mind Cymru, 2017). However, investing in social capital can create an environment conducive to those restricted markers being met more quickly if and when leave to remain is granted.

Social housing tenants as a population experience particular challenges, many of which are similar to those experienced by sanctuary seeking communities. In the UK, social housing tenants who transferred to Universal Credit experience serious financial difficulties. While across the UK, the average level of rent arrears for this group is £131 a week, this more than trebles in Wales to £450



under Universal Credit (Protheroe, Mudd & Fury, 2017). Detailed analysis of the 2013-14 National Survey for Wales' results showed that when controlling for a wide range of other factors, people are much more likely to be materially deprived if they live in social housing; have low to very low life satisfaction, and be separated or divorced. These challenges can be addressed and harnessed through asset-based approaches and maintained through stronger social capital on which people can draw in times of difficulty.

Opportunities for participation helps individuals to realise their assets, empowers communities to take action and facilitates integration. It helps people to realise their full potential and makes it easier for them to access services, reduces educational and health inequalities, helps them to find jobs and, fundamentally, underpins social cohesion and community empowerment (Smith, 2015). Hence, interested sanctuary seekers and social housing tenants were invited to be part of an action group to look at different issues and challenges in Morrison (Swansea) and collectively use their assets to create and develop an asset-based community development project. The group met weekly and the number, frequency of meetings, and the community meeting space in Morrison were decided by the group as part of the co-productive approach. Following these sessions, the action group came up with different ideas to address the issues in their community and examined the solutions more closely. Through investigations and discussions, the group categorised them according to feasibility, group skills /capacity and the availability of resources. A consensus was reached for the three top project ideas...

- Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown and social distancing measures, the action group made a collective decision to focus on the production of a monthly newsletter for Morriston; in those circumstances, it was an idea they could bring to fruition.
- Although some plans have been paused by the pandemic, they have continued with discussions about the other ideas and community activities for the future.
- Data packs were provided to members of the group who needed them and the group have continued with the weekly meetings through Zoom.
- They have used their WhatsApp group to communicate, share information and support each other.
- Progressively, the group has worked to materialise their project ideas and so far they have produced seven newsletters, and engaged with key local stakeholders such as presenting at the Morriston Regeneration Forum, which is a partnership group working together to support the economic regeneration of Morriston.
- The group has successfully formed its own identity calling themselves 'We Love Morriston' and work collaboratively with Public Health Wales and our project partner TaiPawb.
- Additionally, the 'We Love Morriston' group has set up its own social media communications channels, and are in the process of registering for membership with the Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) to build the foundations for sustainability after the end of the CAPITAL project at the end of March 2021.

A summary of the findings

- Community members need to be included in the consultation and decision-making process before an agenda is decided.
- Co-production is about inclusivity and equal power-sharing from everyone who is involved.
- Participants report a stronger connection with their neighbours and significantly closer relations within the group; they feel like 'family'.
- Participation and contribution are not limited to attending every meeting as participants have been able to share ideas, participate and communicate on the groups' WhatsApp platform.
- Participants report a strong feeling of ownership of their self-determined project because they have been fully and equally involved in the decision-making, planning and operation of it.
- Working together has given participants a sense of belonging and comradery.
- Participants benefit from regular encouragement and, support, to feel empowered to take on different tasks as the project progresses. This is attributed to low confidence and the perceived need by participants for 'professional expertise'
- Due to Covid-19, participants have redefined 'community' because of the broader online involvement with people who do not reside in their immediate locality.

COVID-19 measures and lockdown significantly hampered this process because people's commitments shifted to adapt to a different way of life.

However, the WhatsApp group made it possible for people to still keep in contact and contribute to the project in their own time and space. Some participants did not attend meetings but contributed their ideas, and stayed connected through the WhatsApp group. Although the project's initial plan was to physically bring people together to work on the project, community engagement and collaboration has to be flexible enough to let people participate most suitably and appropriately; to build and maintain inclusivity and connectedness.

It is evident that Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) focused work is essential for building relationships between different groups in the community and facilitating integration for newcomers; regardless if they are sanctuary seekers or British citizens moving into a new area. We have learnt that there is a tendency to overlook some communities' assets and capabilities because of their status, environment and level of influence. However, when afforded the opportunity and applied in a way that benefits and empower individuals, inclusive

co-productive and ABCD approach has the capacity to:

- Increase confidence and resilience
- Improve people's immediate environment
- Improve health and well-being.

Clearly, it is local people who are the experts of the needs in their communities, and who know how to best address issues that affect them and implement solutions.

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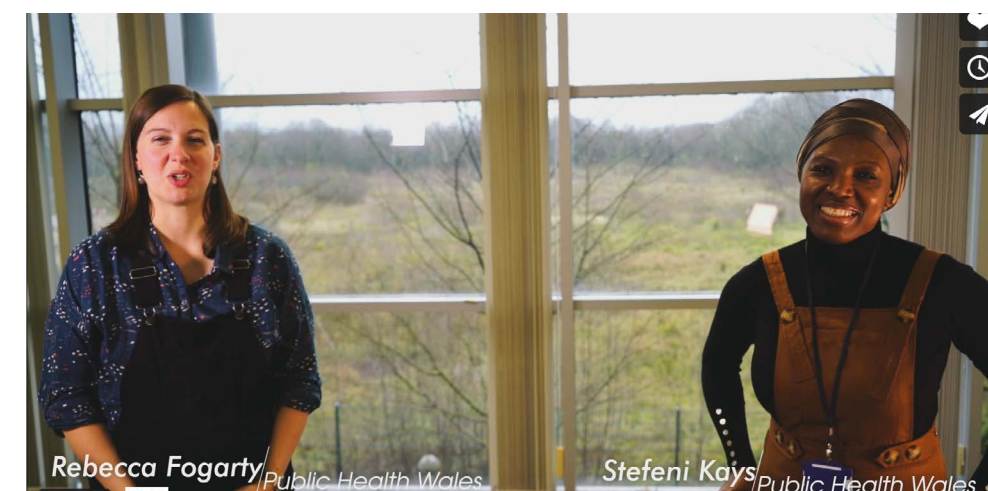
Welovemorriston2020@gmail.com
@welovemorriston
Facebook: We Love Morriston

[Watch the CAPITAL Project Webinar presentation on the PHNC Website](#)



Watch the We Love Morriston Project Video

Watch on YouTube



Watch the We Love Morriston Project leads, Rebecca Fogarty, Stefeni Kays and Ceri Meloy Discuss the project

Watch on YouTube

COVID-19: Learning lessons from the community-led response in Wales

Charlotte Grey, Lucia Homolova, Alisha Davies – Research & Evaluation Division, Public Health Wales
Collaborative research by Public Health Wales, University of Bristol, and Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Supported by the Health Foundation

During the coronavirus pandemic, communities across Wales have come together in many different positive ways to support each other; for example, by people giving up their time freely to help others (particularly to help those who were shielding, or self-isolating due to contact with the virus) in practical ways such as delivering shopping and picking up prescriptions or dog walking; checking in on lonely neighbours; or befriending and offering more social support. This community-led action is an important community resilience asset based on social capital; and understanding why people were motivated to help and how this action can be sustained is really important for building longer-term resilience in our communities across Wales, and for the wellbeing of individuals and future generations.

We know that this from-the-ground-up, community-led action and pro-social behaviour was driven by people's need to help vulnerable individuals and their local communities during this unprecedented time of crisis, and that these volunteering activities took place in a spectrum of different ways. For example, through more informal action by people as individuals acting on their own to support their friends and neighbours (e.g. by handing out "Hello I'm your neighbour" cards); or acting through existing or newly established local community and neighbourhood groups by coordinating local support; and finally more formal community-driven support such as providing support to the NHS through making PPE (e.g. face shields) or volunteering time to help at vaccination centres, or supporting the council community response to help those at greatest need such as facilitating transport to vaccination centres.

Early in the pandemic, we created an online map of need and the level of community support in response to COVID-19 across Wales (<https://covidresponsemap.wales>) using routine data. This showed us geographical differences in risk from COVID-19, and pockets across Wales of highly visible community support and some with lower support, even within more deprived areas. Supported by funding from the Health Foundation, Public Health Wales are continuing to work together with the University of Bristol and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, to learn more about the enablers and barriers to the citizen-led response in Wales, hearing from those who have engaged in action to effect change in their local communities during the pandemic. The research programme also seeks to explore how we can map localised community response more systematically and comprehensively to better reflect what has been happening on the ground across Wales.

In particular, we want to understand why there seemed to be more visible community-led action in some areas and less so in others. We will speak to people who provided (community members), received (self-isolating or shielding), and co-ordinated (voluntary organisations, and health and social care organisations) community support, to find out more about:

- What factors contributed to a strong community-led action in some areas of Wales but not others, and how did this support address the needs of the most vulnerable within the community?
- How can community-led action help with addressing inequalities in health?

- How can new and existing community-led action be sustained and effectively integrated into the health, third sector and social support system?
- Can social media data provide insights on levels of need and community-led action across Wales in real-time?

We want to use this information to ensure that this locally driven informal and formal

community-led action can be better empowered, supported and sustained to help community-led action can be better empowered, supported and sustained to help protect and buffer against some of the longer-term health, social and economic challenges of COVID-19.

Please email Charlotte.Grey2@wales.nhs.uk for further information.

Whose space is it anyway?

Children and teenagers need and are entitled to quality places and time for play as part of their everyday life within their own community. Making better use of outdoor community spaces will support children, parents and communities feel more confident about playing out, and therefore, better connected.

Playing, particularly outdoors, is the most natural and enjoyable way for children to be active, keep well and be happy. When children can access good outdoor space, it:

- Is free and available to all
- Provides children with opportunities to meet and exceed physical activity guidelines
- Provides opportunities to socialise and meet up with their friends and other people
- Provides a way to cope with uncertainty and change.

Although lockdown has been a time of uncertainty and worry, it also presented some opportunities. There was a focus in government and public health advice for people to go outside once a day for their health and well-being and this helped to normalise people being out and about. Travel restrictions meant that traffic levels were reduced significantly, enabling more children to play near and around their houses safely. Neighbours enjoyed the cleaner air and the sense of community and connection.

However, children's access to outdoor

space for play, exercise and enjoyment differs greatly across Wales. Some children live in homes with outdoor gardens, ample outdoor community space and supportive carers with time to support play, whilst others don't. These inequalities were heightened and emphasised during the recent lockdown situation.

Now, as some restrictions are soon to be lifted, Play Wales renews its calls for better use of community spaces – such as school grounds and streets – to enable more children to be visible and to play out in their community.

Attention should be given to developing extended use of school grounds when the teaching day ends and during weekends. School grounds often represent the largest single outdoor space in many communities. This is particularly the case for children with little or no access to private gardens or safe play areas.

Attention should also be given to secure safer streets. Parents and children often report traffic as a limiting factor to playing out in



neighbourhoods. We welcome the recent Senedd Cymru decision to initially back plans to make 20mph speed limits the default in residential areas in Wales. We would like to see support for street play projects which encourage attitudinal shifts for road users. These are often resident-led but can also be school-led or supported by community development organisations. Our work with councils demonstrates that through street play, children are learning road awareness and cycle/scooting skills; parents report greater confidence in children's capabilities around traffic and drivers report a greater awareness of the presence of children and others in and around roads.

There is an urgent need to ensure that more children can access outdoor play on a daily

basis. The potential benefits in terms of the positive effects on children's health and happiness, community engagement and well-being and enhancement of the local sense of community are overwhelming.

Play Wales [manifesto](#), *Wales – a play friendly place*, is calling for the next Government in Wales to continue to prioritise play, particularly playing outdoors.

Further reading:

[Street play resources](#)

[Use of school grounds out of teaching hours toolkit](#)

The research also shows how the pandemic led to the formation of new partnerships and collaborations across the VCS. These collaborative ways of working were a catalyst for innovations in services and the formation of community initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of harder to reach groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, such as those who are digitally excluded. The research underscores the importance of the finger-tip knowledge held within the sector, combined with the agility of place-based community networks, in contributing to the development of local

and national policy interventions that aim to support Wales to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report will be published in spring 2021 and shared widely with the VCS and partners. It will be made available on the publications section of the Public Health Wales Research and Evaluation webpage.

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The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in COVID-19 recovery efforts - Alice Willatt, Research and Evaluation Division, Public Health Wales

In November 2020, Public Health Wales launched a research project to explore the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in meeting the needs of people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a co-produced project, the research involved collaboration with Voluntary County Councils. We conducted interviews and focus groups with VCS representatives from a range of organisations working to support people around employment, housing, food insecurity and mental health, amongst other areas. We also ran an innovative virtual 'data and intelligence asset mapping' activity, to identify the key sources of insight and data that have enabled the sector to locate and respond to emerging needs.

The research findings, soon to be published in a Public Health Wales report, underscore

the critical role the VCS plays in emergency preparedness, particularly in delivering an organised response that bridges gaps in public sector provision.

Our research identifies how the 'finger-tip' knowledge held by networks of small-medium sized organisations, particularly those that have long been embedded in communities, enabled the rapid delivery of targeted responses to need. In lots of instances, we found the pandemic increased information sharing across the VCS, and in some cases with statutory services and Local Authorities. This increased communication and exchange of insight, often facilitated through the use of online forums and virtual meeting spaces, enabled organisations to rapidly respond to a range of issues, from food insecurity, to social isolation and domestic violence.

The Community Wellbeing Team Initiative – Tai Teulu Family Housing

Towards the end of 2020, additional funding was made available by the Welsh Government in partnership with Swansea Bay Local Health Board, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services. The purpose of the funding was to create or extend existing third sector support services to address low level mental health and well-being issues. The aim of which is to reduce the need for more specialist mental health support. Family Housing successfully bid for funding to create the new Community Wellbeing Team (CWT).

Since March 2020, we have connected with between 400 to 600 tenants a week focussing on those over 55+ and those shielding, many local community services responses were also targeted to that age group. But Covid has impacted everyone, we recognised we needed to reach more people. The CWT work alongside existing teams such as Family Housing Community team to proactively target tenants that historically wouldn't have been contacted via by other services.

We understood the importance of being proactive to reach out to the wider community. Some people have found themselves in a situation completely alien to them and they may not know about the services available to them. Tenants will often contact us for help when they are at crisis point. We understand that now, more than ever, was the time to prioritise a proactive approach to outreach work, with an emphasis on linking with all the community services. This would allow us to work better together to reach as many tenants as possible, as quickly as possible to prevent people and families going into a crisis situation.

The CWT sets out to achieve the following;

- Connect people with support service which will have a consequential positive impact on their mental wellbeing and community and peer-support groups to enhance their mental wellbeing

- Develop mental health peer-support networks where no such networks/groups exist in either in person or online.

CWT started in Jan 2021 and in two short months, we have successfully spoken with over 300 tenants. Using strength based conversations, the team were able to identify skills, knowledge and areas of interest. This enabled us to introduce and connect over 80 tenants to other services and to each other, including;

- FHA financial & tenancy related support
- Through the FHA lottery funded loan device scheme, tenants were loaned a tablet / device or issued with data to get online
- Building virtual community coffee mornings
- Enabling tenants to create community WhatsApp groups
- Befriending service to tackle loneliness
- Bereavement support groups
- Statutory services such as Social Services
- Linking with Local Area Coordinators to take up volunteering opportunities

As well as the statistics, the feedback from those we contacted has been overwhelmingly positive, many commented that the CWT team member was the first person they'd spoken to in a long time, many having been on long term furlough or made redundant.

Family Housing has now successfully bid for further funding to continue the project for another 12 months. As we ease out of the lockdown restrictions we will look to recovery. To help with this we will expand the device loan scheme getting more and more people online. We will use networks in the local communities, providing space and removing barriers for tenants themselves to build peer to peer support networks.

For more information please contact Emma.Morgan@fha-wales.com or telephone 01792 460192.



“ Launching The FHA Community Wellbeing Team in Swansea & NPT ”

From now until March 2021, the team will be working to assist tenants to access services or to get community groups off the ground to help reduce poor mental health, social isolation & money worries



Would you benefit from a little more help & support but not sure where to start?

Sometimes, it's hard to see the wood for the trees! The team will take time to talk through what your concerns are and help put you in touch with the right people. Just some examples of how we can help:

- Income, benefits & debt (especially if you've been affected by Covid-19)
- Linking you with the right people for tenancy support
- Connecting you with local support groups & agencies



Time on your hands

Join our new befriending service!
Fancy chatting to your neighbours to pass the time or others going through the dreaded home schooling or have been affected by Covid? We can link you with a nearby neighbour to do just that.

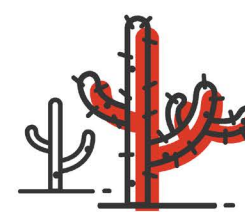


Walking in muddy puddles

Planning for the future. Are you interested in setting up a socially distanced walking club to beat isolation blues? Talk to us!



Do you live in a scheme and want to know more about how you can set up a residents association? or want to get off the ground with a WhatsApp group? We've got the info you need.



How do you Zoom again!?

From home schooling to keeping in contact with family and friends to updating a Universal Credit journal, doing things digitally has become a daily part of life for many. The Community Wellbeing Team can help keep you connected:

- Offer online tutorials on how to register on Zoom / Universal credit / different platforms and navigate your way around the screen
- Loan a device to you to get you started (subject to availability)

To get in contact with the team, please contact 01792 460192 for more information

Podcasts

Welcome to our new Public Health Network Cymru Podcast Page of the Ebulletin. Here you can listen to the the previously released Podcasts.

We have recently published a new Podcast with Dr Claire Thomas, Designated Doctor for the National Safeguarding Team at NHS Wales, and Pediatric Lead for the Child Death Review Programme. The Podcast discusses what impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on children in Wales

If you are interested in recording a podcast with us in the future, please contact us via email: publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk

The Impact of COVID-19 on Children



More Podcasts

Arts and Health: Roadshow



Nutrition: Early Years with Andrea Basu



International Health: Migrant Health

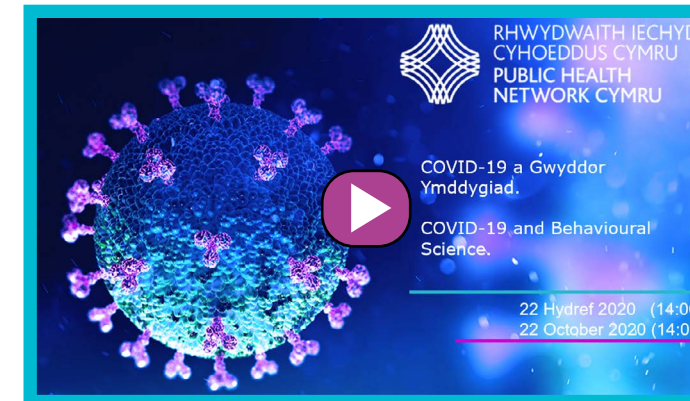


View our full list of Podcasts on our website

[Visit our webiste](#)

Videos

Welcome to Press Play, here you can get the latest PHNC videos from youtube!



Green Recovery Delivery Partnership – Priorities for action

A new report by Natural Resources Wales has identified a sustainable pathway for Wales out of the Coronavirus pandemic that respond to the climate emergency and the need for job creation.

Press play to watch the video on the Public Health Network Cymru YouTube channel.

More Videos



The Unequal Pandemic: COVID-19 and Health Inequalities

Professor Clare Bambra of Newcastle University outlines how inequalities in COVID-19 are related to existing inequalities in chronic diseases and the social determinants of health.



COVID-19 and BAME Communities – the Welsh Government Response

Describing the work of the First Minister's Advisory Group on health inequalities due to COVID-19 in Black Asian Minority Ethnic #communities and the Welsh Government response, with Dr Heather Payne.

Watch our full COVID-19 Webinar series on YouTube

[Watch on YouTube](#)

Enjoyed watching a webinar? We would appreciate your feedback in this [short survey](#).

The Grapevine

Wales needs action to tackle premature deaths from chronic diseases

Adam Fletcher, Head of British Heart Foundation (BHF) Cymru, highlights why smoking, obesity and alcohol continue to present a huge public health challenge in Wales and measures to tackle them must ensure that the health inequality gap is not widened.

Heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lung disease and complications because of diabetes cause well over half of all deaths in Wales, at least 20,000 every year. They are known as non-communicable diseases (or NCDs) and many of these deaths could be prevented if more was done to reduce the numbers of people who are overweight or have obesity, who smoke, and who drink more than the recommended amount of alcohol.

The scale of the challenge

An ageing population, the rise in co-morbidities, an increase in many risk factors for heart and circulatory disease, and persisting health inequalities, all mean that strong action is required. Tobacco alone costs the Welsh NHS an estimated £386 million per year, with the greatest burden of tobacco-related illness concentrated in the poorest communities. Meanwhile, illnesses associated with obesity are projected to cost the Welsh NHS more than £465 million per year by 2050.

Heart and circulatory diseases, respiratory disease and cancer are the main contributors to the overall burden of disease, and years of life lost in Wales. Wales' s healthy life expectancy is low at only 61.7, and reaches as low as 50.7 in the most deprived communities. We know that many deaths from NCDs, and the lost healthy years of life caused by chronic diseases, could be avoided by addressing

some of the biggest risk factors more effectively.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the challenge of premature deaths in Wales into even sharper focus.

We are now aware of the links between underlying heart conditions and risk factors such as smoking, excessive alcohol intake and obesity on the severity of Covid-19 infections.

This is why BHF Cymru is working with other leading health charities and the Welsh Government to address this challenge. Ahead of May' s Senedd election, we want to see all political parties make the prevention of some of Wales' biggest killers a top priority and commit to a range of public health interventions to reduce the numbers of people who are overweight or obese, who smoke, and who drink more than the recommended amount of alcohol.

The changes we need

BHF Cymru in collaboration with, ASH Wales, Asthma UK - British Lung Foundation Wales, Stroke Association Wales, Diabetes Cymru, Cancer Research UK and the British Liver Trust has set out a series of priorities to tackle three of the biggest risk factors to improve the health of everyone in Wales: tobacco use, unhealthy diets and alcohol consumption.

It is vital that Welsh political leaders now commit to empowering people to make healthier choices through interventions to reduce smoking rates, levels of overweight and obesity and alcohol consumption. All of which we know impact worse on the poorest in our society. The evidence shows that the environment around us heavily influences whether we smoke, the amount of alcohol

we drink and what we eat. Population-wide measures can ensure that the health inequality gap is not widened and that all communities are given the best opportunities to make healthier choices. For example, the visibility of products on our high streets and the way they are marketed all contribute to Wales having a low healthy life expectancy.

The next Welsh Government must also commit to greater investment in treatment and support services and ensure they reach everyone in Wales who needs them. These services are the most effective way to quit smoking or reduce alcohol consumption. However, current services in Wales are not reaching everyone who needs them. Although Help Me Quit is effective at helping some people to quit smoking, only about 3% of smokers in Wales access the service each year.

The restoration of support services for weight management, alcohol treatment

and smoking cessation should be at the heart of the NHS' s recovery planning. This should include sharing learning on how new technology can provide more flexible and accessible options for people in need of support.

Time for change

Ahead of the election in May, all political parties must commit to taking stronger action against preventable death and disease. The next Welsh Government has the opportunity to support people to make positive health choices and reduce their risk of preventable illness. We must act now to ensure that the healthy choice is an easy choice for everyone in Wales.

Full details of the report and its recommendations can be found here: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/in-your-area/wales/ncd-prevention-report>

Advisory Board Members Wanted - Centre for innovative Ageing- Active Building Centre Research Programme

Active Building Centre Research Programme (ABC-RP) aims to combine solar and low/zero carbon technologies with building design and operation to transform the construction and energy sectors. The ABC Research Programme aims to develop and test innovative tools and technologies that will ensure buildings of all scales contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions and a more sustainable built environment.

The Healthy Living in Low Carbon Homes team are looking for new Advisory Board Members. Researchers from Swansea University, Centre for Innovative Ageing (Healthy Living in low carbon homes team) are examining the impact of these low carbon homes on the people who move into them or who are having energy efficient measures installed in their homes (retrofit). We want to understand the ways in which these low carbon homes or installed technologies may change our energy behaviours and social practices and influence health and wellbeing outcomes. The link between homes and health are well established and we would like to increase this understanding further with regard to low carbon homes and their role in delivering better outcomes for population health.

Involvement in the Advisory Board will provide a unique opportunity to: Contribute to the success of the Healthy Living in Low Carbon homes pilot project within the overarching Active Building Centre Research Programme

More details about the Centre for Innovative Ageing (CIA) are available on the website [Active Building Centre Research Programme - Swansea University](#)

More details about ABC-RP are available on the website: [The Active Building Centre Research Programme - Welcome \(abc-rp.com\)](#)

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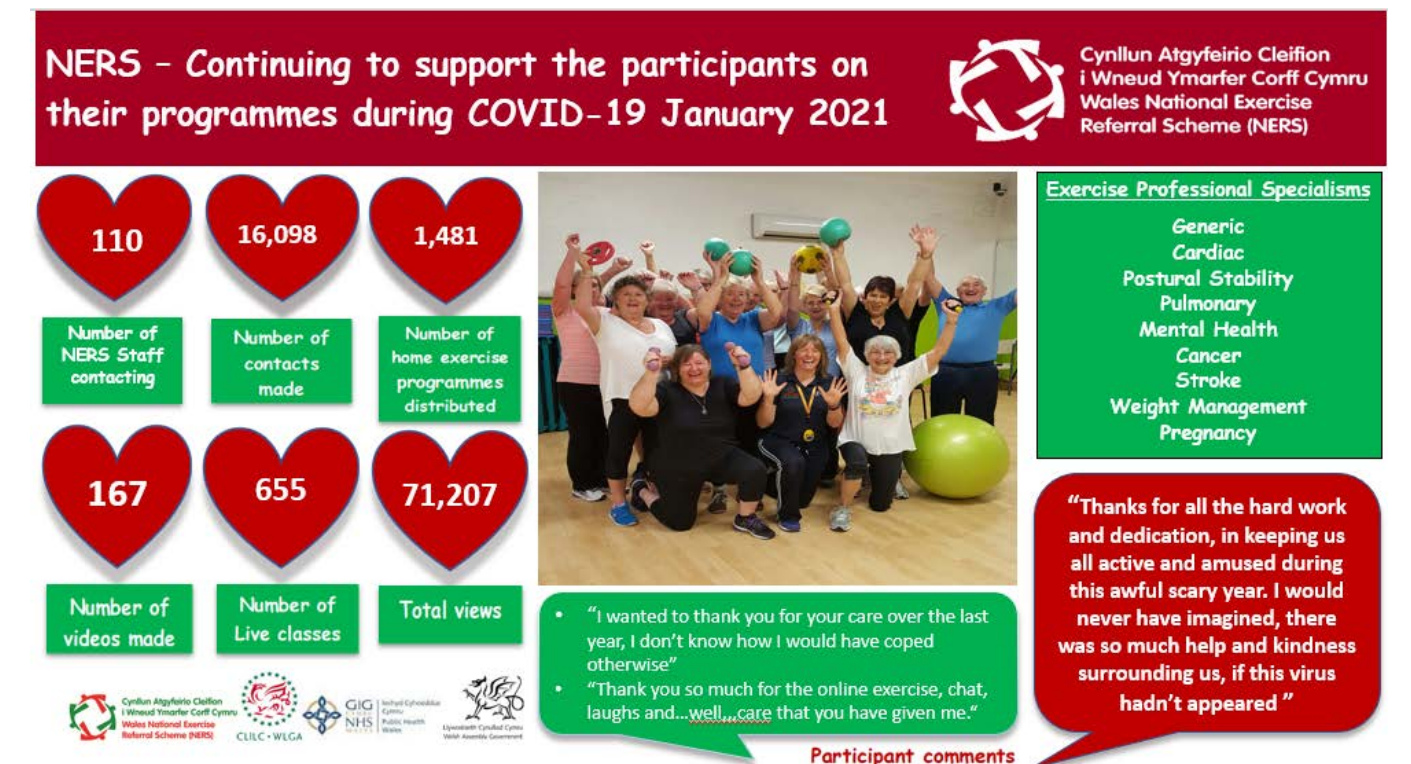
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All Wales National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) Update

The NERS Programme has been suspended since March 21st, 2020 due to Covid-19, however, the Exercise Referral Professionals across Wales have been developing and delivering virtual activity sessions for those under the supervision of a NERS Exercise Referral Professional and were on the NERS programme at the time of suspension, or for those who have been cleared by a Health Professional to undertake these activities.

This Infographic shows how many people have been accessing and benefitting from the virtual delivery throughout January 2021.



The Benefits of BAME Staff Networks

Shamala Govindasamy, Co-chair BAME Network, Public Health Wales

For employees to reach their full potential, there must be no fear of discrimination or prejudice and a belief that career opportunities or experience of work is not predetermined by ethnicity, religion, nationality or colour.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff Networks are on the increase. As co-chair of the Public Health Wales BAME Network alongside Hibo Asad, I will discuss the benefits of organisations hosting a BAME Network and outline some typical Network activity.

Why have a BAME Staff Network?

A BAME Network aims to empower staff from diverse non-white, ethnic or minority religious groups and create a sense of community. Many Networks also welcome allies - those with a positive interest in driving forward racial equality. Networks typically hold regular meetings, providing space for BAME staff and allies to meet, talk informally and raise any issues, as well as the opportunity to bring about positive, organisational change. Some benefits of a BAME Network are set out as below:

- Provide a safe and confidential environment to meet other BAME staff and share experiences, opinions, concerns and ideas.
- Promote equality through active involvement and consultation with organisational strategy, policies and guidance which could affect BAME staff.
- Attract and promote a diverse range of talent by providing clear pathways for BAME staff through mentoring schemes and community outreach
- Create opportunities for BAME staff to engage with other Networks within the organisation to share best practice and understand intersectionality.
- Signpost members to information such as relevant research, policy development and support.

Benefits for the Organisation

The information above shows the importance and value of the staff Networks, particularly in building an inclusive culture and responding to the different needs of marginalised groups. Below are some benefits of BAME Networks that are more specific to the organisation:

- Help create a culturally inclusive organisation by raising awareness around issues on racial equality through signposting resources, raising awareness of multi-cultural practices and continuing the conversation on race and equality beyond the Network
- Opportunity to consult with staff from under-represented groups to shape policy and services
- Assistance to mainstream and embed diversity and inclusion
- Improved staff satisfaction, performance and productivity
- Improved recruitment, attendance and retention
- Improved reputation as a desirable employer

BAME Network in Public Health Wales

The BAME Network at Public Health Wales was established in July 2019 with membership continuing to expand, particularly since the pandemic and the move to remote working. The Network is currently developing work streams to deliver active content covering: anti-racism awareness, cultural celebration and mentoring (internal and external to the organisation).

Members are active in raising awareness regarding current issues e.g. the Black Lives Matter movement and the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on the BAME population. The Network works with the PHW communications team to ensure these

issues are highlighted at the organisational level.

In my role as Network co-chair I participated in a 'Chat with the CEO' video outlining staff experiences of racial gaslighting and micro-aggressions, how to start and continue the conversation on race and tips on how to be actively anti-racist. The discussion was well received with staff feeding back that the video had been informative, and gave them increased confidence to discuss race with ease.

Recent activity includes a programme of awareness raising activities to celebrate Black History Month and a multi-cultural celebration calendar. The BAME Network is also working closely with the Diversity and Inclusion team to deliver a mentoring programme for staff protected characteristics which launches this year.

Going forward the BAME Network is interested to look at ethnicity pay gap reporting to identify areas for improvement, as well as working with Diverse Cymru on the BAME Workplace Good Practice Certification.

BAME Networks in the time of COVID

The growth of the Public Health Wales BAME Network was significant as it took place in parallel with the global Black Lives Matter movement, and the realisation of the

disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities. Combined, these political exposés have magnified the shocking health inequalities caused by persistent structural racism e.g. Black mothers in the UK are 5 times more likely to die during child birth. On a positive note, one of the key recommendations to come out of the [Welsh Government report into the factors influencing negative COVID-19 outcomes for individuals from BAME backgrounds](#) is the requirement for BAME Staff Networks across all NHS Wales Health Boards.

Going Forward

From this article I hope that you better understand the role BAME Networks play in implementing clear and measurable action on race equality, whilst acting as a collective voice to improve the visibility and influence of ethnic minority staff.

As your next step, why not find out more about BAME/diversity Networks in your organisation? There is a role for everyone as a Network member or ally to drive forward diversity and equality for all.

'Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'
James Baldwin

News

New study finds Coronavirus transmission highest in households and hospitality

Households are the most significant source of infection, while working in the hospitality sector or visiting the pub are also significant risks. Smoking or vaping appears to have a small but significant effect on transmission too.

[Read more](#)

£9m invested into innovative health and social care Intensive Learning Academies

The Minister for Health and Social Services Vaughan Gething has today announced over £9m in funding to create new academies designed to support the next generation of leaders within Wales' health and care sector.

[Read more](#)

New FAQs published on vitamin D and Coronavirus

Public Health Wales has published a series of FAQs on vitamin D in relation to Coronavirus.

[Read more](#)

Majority of parents say their children are less active than before lockdown

More than two in three parents say they have seen their children' s physical activity levels decrease during lockdown, new research published ahead of schools reopening has found.

[Read more](#)

One million people receive first vaccine dose

One million people across Wales have had at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine, meaning almost 40% of the adult population now have a level of protection from COVID-19.

[Read more](#)

Events

Sustrans Big Pedal 2021

19 - 30 April

National Event

Sustrans Big Pedal will go ahead even if schools are closed. Sustrans have taken a more flexible approach and have designed fun and interactive school resources to be suitable for situations where pupils are learning remotely. Active journeys taken from home or physical activity completed at home will count as one journey in the challenge for pupils learning remotely.

[Read more](#)

World No Tobacco Day 2021: Commit to Quit

31 May

WHO has launched a year-long global campaign for World No Tobacco Day 2021 – "Commit to Quit" . This campaign aims to support 100 million people worldwide in their attempt to give up tobacco through various initiatives and digital solutions.

[Read more](#)

Next steps for R&D in Wales - funding, developing collaboration between Welsh HEIs, raising the international profile, and contributing to economic recovery

14 May

Online

This conference will examine next steps for R&D and international research partnerships in Wales. Areas for discussion include funding, collaboration, place, research skills and infrastructure, COVID-19 and Welsh R&D on the world stage.

[Read more](#)

View the full list of events on our website

[Visit our website](#)

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Alcohol

Arts and Health

Gambling

Health and Social Care

Human Rights

International Health Development

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Nutrition

Obesity

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Policy

Sexual Health

Sleep and Health

Smoking

Substance Misuse

Sun Awareness

Violence and Abuse

Next Issue

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

