

**Rhwydwaith Iechyd  
Cyhoeddus Cymru**  
**Public Health  
Network Cymru**



# **Public attitudes and behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic, a behavioural science approach**

**May 2022**

# Welcome

Welcome to the May edition of the e-bulletin.

Following our most recent webinar focused on [public attitudes and behaviours in Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), this e-bulletin focuses on public attitudes and behaviours in Wales and the impact this is having on population health and wellbeing.

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](mailto:Publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk) or find us on twitter [@PHNetworkCymru](#)

## Contact us

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## Your last chance to win a £10 WH Smiths voucher for 10 minutes of your time

Public Health Network Cymru are undertaking a [survey](#) (estimated completion time of 10 minutes) with our members. The Survey will close on the 10th June.

We are looking to understand a little more about you, your experience of the network and how we can improve it further to connect members, share knowledge and create change for a better Wales.

The survey is anonymous and the results will be used by Public Health Network Cymru Team for developing an improvement plan.

# Headlines

## Enhancing behavioural science capability within Local Public Health Teams

### Authors

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On Thursday 19th May 2022, Public Health Wales launched its newly established [Behavioural Science Unit](#) (BSU) for health and wellbeing. The unit provides specialist expertise on behavioural science and will work collaboratively with stakeholders across Wales to increase behavioural science capacity and capability. Don't worry if you didn't make it to the BSU launch, we will soon be sharing a recording of the event along with the slides presented by the speakers.

Behaviours play a key role in improving health and wellbeing. Identifying and understanding behaviours and what supports and constrains them is integral to achieving the ambitions of public health policy and practice. Behavioural science is the systematic study of behaviour; what enables it, what prevents it, and how best to influence it. The application of behavioural science involves the use of scientific models and frameworks in the development, implementation, and evaluation of behaviour change interventions. Such interventions include policies, products, communications, and services designed to protect or improve health at an individual, community, and population level.

As part of their role in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Local Public Health Team (CTM LPHT) established a Risk Communication and Community Engagement workstream, which aimed to provide responsive communication support around fast changing public guidance, and to inform and engage with communities during the roll out of the Testing and Contact Tracing programmes.

At the core of this approach was the COM-B model, which continues to be utilised by the team for insight gathering and engagement activities. You can read more about this later on in the e-bulletin.

Members of the Betsi Cadwaladr Public Health Team have also worked closely with their Health Board colleagues to apply behavioural science approaches. Their work focused on reducing Nosocomial Transmission of COVID-19 using the COM-B model. The team facilitated sessions focussed on defining behaviours, and identifying barriers to these behaviours, in relation to Safe Change, Safe Break and Safe Ward Rounds. Interventions based on the insights are being taken forward as part of the BCUHB Safe, Clean, Care campaign.

As a result of the above work, the benefits of applying behavioural science approaches have been widely recognised and both BCU and CTM LPHTs have undertaken a staff survey to assess behavioural science capability and the opportunities and motivation to use the approaches. Insights from the survey led to collaborations with the BSU to apply the COM-B model and the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW) to enhance the application of behavioural science. The work is based on principles of collaboration and co-production and includes:

- Exploration of opportunities to increase the use of behavioural science
- Consideration of what the team need to do differently to maximise such opportunities
- Identification of barriers to, and facilitators of, changes to practice
- Development, delivery, and evaluation of strategies to enable changes to practice

It is envisaged that alongside enhancing behavioural science practice within CTM and BCU LPHTs, learning from this work will inform wider capability and capacity building across the public health system in Wales.

If you have questions or ideas that you'd like to share with us, please do get in touch via our email address [PHW.BehaviourChange@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:PHW.BehaviourChange@wales.nhs.uk)

# The Use of Behavioural Science in our COVID-19 Response: Cwm Taf Morgannwg

## Authors

*Rhian Meaden, Principal Public Health Practitioner,  
Public Health Wales*

*Rebecca Stewart, Principal Public Health Specialist,  
Cardiff & Vale University Health Board*



As part of the overall regional response to COVID-19 within Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) University Health Board, a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) workstream was established in 2020. This workstream was initially established based on guidance issued by the World Health Organisation, and aimed to provide responsive communication support around fast changing public guidance, and to inform and engage with communities during the roll out of the Testing and Contact Tracing programmes.

In order to take a more pro-active, pre-planned approach to communication and engagement, the RCCE workstream developed a local engagement framework. This framework drew on behavioural science, and outlined considerations for effective communication approaches for different cohorts. It identified wider targeted action needed to enable the engagement and support of groups who were deemed more vulnerable, or who had specific additional considerations related to COVID-19.

The CTM engagement framework was used to explore behaviours associated with both the prevention of COVID-19, and the mitigation of direct and indirect harm, and at the core of this approach was the COM-B model [1]. The COM-B model recognises behaviour as part of an interacting system, and is underpinned by the belief that for a desired behaviour to be taken up, a person needs to feel **capable**, have the **opportunity** to perform the behaviours, and be **motivated** to do so.

To support the work of the RCCE workstream, and implementation of the framework, a communication and engagement tool was developed to assist planning for a collective approach to communication and engagement with identified target audiences. The tool was again based on the COM-B model, and was utilised to guide facilitated discussions in order to gain insight from identified target audiences to support the aforementioned planning. It was additionally utilised during COVID-19 outbreaks as an incident management tool to understand facilitators and barriers to engagement with desired COVID-19 protective behaviours.

The communication and engagement tool was utilised with a number of target audiences within the CTM region, including staff supporting adults with learning disabilities, hospital based staff and young people, and insight gathered was used to generate recommendations for colleagues and partners such as Communications, and Test, Trace and Protect workstream leads.

This tool, and the use of COM-B has remained at the core of CTM's approach to understanding engagement with COVID-19 protective behaviours, such as testing and vaccination uptake, and insight gathering methods have diversified to include a number of large scale regional surveys and a national study.

Vaccine equity remains a priority within CTM, and we continue to utilise behavioural science at the heart of our approach to understanding barriers and facilitators to engagement with such, via the development of conversation aids for partner organisations, surveys, focus groups, and the development of template vaccination invitation letters and text messages.

For more information, please contact Rhian Meaden, Principal Public Health Practitioner, via [rhian.meaden@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:rhian.meaden@wales.nhs.uk)

[1] Michie, S., Stralen, M.M., West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. Available from: <https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>

## — Film is effective tool to promote behaviour change for kindness

### Article from [Public Health Wales](#)

An independent evaluation by Bangor University and Public Health Wales' World Health Organization Collaborating Centre (WHO CC) of a short film promoting kindness in Wales during COVID-19 restrictions, has found that films that provoke strong emotional reactions can still be perceived positively and lead to effective behaviour change.

The evaluation of the #TimeToBeKind campaign has been published in the BMC Public Health, a peer-reviewed, open access journal within science, technology, engineering and medicine.

In response to successive COVID-19 restrictions in Wales, the [Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACE\) Support Hub](#), based in the WHO CC, launched the #TimeToBeKind campaign in March 2021. The campaign used a short film broadcast on national television and promoted on social media to encourage behaviour change for kindness.

Mark Bellis, Director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre at Public Health Wales said:

“The evaluation sought to understand people's opinions on the #TimeToBeKind film and to find out more about people's views on the film, how viewing the film made them feel and if they would do anything differently after watching it.

“We found that film can be a highly effective tool to promote behaviour change for kindness. With the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating a move online for many, the findings of the present evaluation are relevant to how public health messaging can adapt and utilise this space to target individuals and promote behaviour change now and in the future.”

[An evaluation of a short film promoting kindness in Wales during COVID 19 restrictions #TimeToBeKind](#)  
<https://youtu.be/x3LyFDDopm8>

# The launch of the Keeping Wales Safe: Covid Behaviours report

## Article from [Nesta](#)

A [new report](#) explores ways to support people to manage risk around Covid-19 using a blended method of behavioural insights, academic research support and place-based testing, and considers how it could be applied to other challenges.

How can you implement person-centred policies until you've walked a mile in someone's shoes? A co-designed Behavioural Insights approach is all about understanding the world from the perspective of people and communities, in order to create services and policies that deliver what matters most to people.

**Keeping Wales Safe: Covid Behaviours** outlines how In spring 2021 the [Behavioural Insights Team \(BIT\)](#), Cardiff University's [Y Lab](#), and People Powered Results at Nesta (PPR) formed a partnership to respond to the significant challenge faced by Welsh Government in supporting communities to manage Covid-19 risk.

In response, the partnership launched the **Keeping Wales Safe: Covid Behaviours** programme in June to work with national stakeholders and three cross-sector, place-based teams across Wales. The programme aimed to co-design and test interventions to increase Covid-safe behaviours around self-isolation and risk mitigation.

### **The programme was designed in phases to:**

- Review existing evidence to explore and contextualise the challenge
- Build a foundational knowledge of Behavioural Insights and how it could be applied to identify and address local need
- Support the generation of ideas and design of interventions
- Inject pace and urgency with a short testing phase, generating insights in real time
- Provide policy recommendations to the Welsh Government
- Consolidate emergent learning and explore sustainability

Testing took place with three local areas in Wales and a national randomised controlled trial took place using the BIT's online experiment platform, [Predictiv](#).

**The teams**, echoing the conclusions of the evidence review, found official communications had limited impact on high-risk groups. Consequently they focussed on co-designing interventions to reach and engage high-risk groups where they were at greatest risk, for example farmers at livestock markets. Information and support offered was differentiated for those groups to maximise impact.

**The national Predictiv trial** found that existing Welsh Government messaging is communicating risk effectively, but that it is doing this best with people already mitigating risk of transmission. More needs to be done to reach those at higher risk of transmitting Covid-19. One intervention – a personal risk profile which can be used online – showed promise in communicating to these groups.



The report highlights the next steps for the teams and how the approach can be applied to systemic change, highlighting the potential to support:

- Policy professionals developing innovative ways to meet key government priorities and ministerial objectives.
- Public services strategists in health and public authorities, including Welsh Local Government Association, health boards and Public Health Wales, investigating ways to create a culture of innovation.

**Phase 2 of the programme is currently underway**, with placed-based teams being supported to apply the approach to non-Covid challenges, and research exploring existing capacity and capabilities around Behavioural Insights within Welsh Government, and how they might support the scale and spread of the approach.

[To read the report click here.](#)

**Participant from Welsh Government said:** “This has been an important piece of work to demonstrate the benefits of applying behavioural science in practice. Co-producing interventions based on behavioural insight to address issues identified in the community, and testing them at rapid pace, was at the heart of what we wanted the research to deliver.

“Welsh Government and its partners can learn a great deal from the findings set out in the report and the ongoing research. This will prove invaluable in shaping approaches to improving health and wellbeing in the future, across organisations and policy areas. We now look forward to building on this to tackle the various challenges facing us.”

**Professor James Lewis, Director of Y Lab, said:** “Y Lab has been delighted to be part of this partnership, itself an innovation in bringing together government, academics, behavioural scientists, and place-based practitioners, to explore different ways of supporting people to test and self-isolate for COVID.

“There is clear appetite and applicability for this approach in numerous other fields, and we look forward to being part of its further development.”

**Dr Craig Johnson, Senior Advisor at the Behavioural Insights Team, said:** “The Behavioural Insights Team was delighted to work in partnership with Nesta’s People Powered Results team and Y Lab at Cardiff University to inform the Welsh Government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The research highlighted important ways in which communications can be improved to support people to reduce their risk of Covid-19 transmission, as well as ways in which local communities can use behavioural insights to improve testing rates.”

**Participant from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council said:** “Having worked with the team and colleagues within the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region on the development of a behavioural change project in connection with Covid-19, the approach has fallen on open ears and minds.

“As a Local Authority Service Manager the approach felt new and positively impactful, and has led to a period of active reflection and the identification of further areas of work, not Covid related which will almost certainly benefit from a fresh approach, including some which remain stubbornly challenging and engrained”.

# Report highlights how nature helped us cope with Covid-19

## Article taken from [Natural Resources Wales](#)

Engaging with nature played a key role in maintaining people's physical and mental health and overall wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, a new report has revealed.

'Why Society Needs Nature' is a collaboration between Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and colleagues from NatureScot, Natural England, Forest Research and the Environment Agency and uses national social surveys, site-based visitor data and practical case studies to provide a snapshot of how people visited nature and their experiences of it during the pandemic.

Dr Sue Williams, senior social scientist for NRW, said:

"Engaging with nature is great for improving our physical health and mental wellbeing and this report highlights the positive and negative impacts the pandemic has had on outdoor recreation and our relationship with nature."

"Although there have been significant restrictions during the pandemic, local greenspaces were commonly visited sites especially during lockdown. When restrictions were eased popular countryside and coastal sites saw almost a doubling of visitor numbers, and during periods of more relaxed restrictions we have also been able to enjoy visiting other areas further away, including national parks and nature reserves."

The importance of these 'green and blue spaces' for people's mental health and well-being during the pandemic has been increasingly acknowledged as essential.

Engaging with nature, going for a walk or sitting in the park has been found to reduce stress and anxiety, while outdoor exercise can reduce depression and help reduce the psychological fear of the pandemic.

However, the research also revealed how engagement with nature became polarised, with some people's interaction increasing, while others visited the outdoors less often than before. Movement restrictions and other Covid-19 related issues, such as fear of infection, meant that a significant proportion of the population did not visit natural spaces at all or did so far less than usual.

Some of the barriers included increased visitor numbers leading to overcrowding and related fears of catching the virus and anxiety about anti-social behaviour.

The research showed that being poor, less educated, living in a deprived area, being unemployed and also being from an ethnic minority all negatively impacted people's access to the benefits nature can provide.

NRW and its partner agencies are working with research partners to further explore these barriers and find solutions to these long-term issues.

The increase in visitor numbers raised a number of environmental and land management issues highlighting the need to meet the demand for outdoor recreation space while at the same time protecting the natural environment and the report highlights the approaches taken to manage the negative environmental impacts at recreational 'hot spots'.

Sue added:

“The evidence in this report clearly highlights that increased engagement with nature significantly helped to support many people in maintaining their physical and mental health and psychological wellbeing during the last year.

“This quote from one of the NRW case studies sums up how nature helped many of us cope with the pandemic:

“The ability to walk in such wonderful surroundings helped to take some of the fear of the pandemic away. It is hard not to believe you will survive when you walk in these woods” (North Cardiff Woodlands Visitor Survey 2020)’.

“Looking to the future, many people expressed their intention to increase the amount of time they spend visiting the outdoors for leisure, recreation or exercise and make positive lifestyle changes when lockdown is over.”

The full report - Why Society Needs Nature – Lessons from research during Covid-19 - can be found here: [Why society needs nature - Lessons from research during Covid-19 - Forest Research](#)



# Podcasts

## Listen to our latest podcast

### Healthy Schools

What is the Welsh Network of Healthy School Scheme and Healthy and Sustainable Pre-school Scheme? What is a Whole School/Setting Approach? What does a 'healthy' School or Pre-school look like?

[Listen](#)

## More Podcasts

[Basic Income, Health and Wales](#)[Listen](#)[Valleys Regional Park](#)[Listen](#)[Vaccine Hesitancy in Wales](#)[Listen](#)[See all podcasts](#)

## Contribute to our Podcast?

If you are interested in recording a podcast with us, get in touch via email: [publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk)

# Videos

## Watch our latest video



**Public attitudes and behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic, a behavioural science approach**

The webinar will highlight examples of how behavioural science was used in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Watch](#)

## More Videos



### Climate and Health in Wales

There is an opportunity for Wales to embed the One Health approach, integrating multiple disciplines across the system and bringing together partners from the human, animal and environmental sectors to work on issues that intersect these domains.

[See all videos](#)

[Watch](#)

### Cyfres Gweminar Webinar Series

Sut gall busnesau lleol ein helpu i gael adferiad ar ôl Covid yn ogystal â mynd i'r afael â newid hinsawdd?

How can social businesses help us recover from Covid as well as tackle climate change?

Glenn Bowen  
Cyfarwyddwr y Rhaglen Fenter, Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru

Glenn Bowen  
Enterprise Programme Director, Wales Co-operative Centre



Amser 14:00  
Start 14:00



### How can social businesses help us recover from Covid as well as tackle climate change?

In this webinar we heard from Glenn Bowen who is the Enterprise Programme Director for the Wales Co-operative Centre. Glenn gave an overview of social enterprises, co-operatives and employee owned business and the opportunities for co-ops and social enterprises in health and social care and the renewable energy sector.

[Watch](#)

# News

27-05-2022

**Coronavirus regulations end in Wales**

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[Read](#)

26-05-2022

**Addressing working conditions will improve good health and wellbeing for all**

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[Read](#)

24-05-2022

**Child Measurement Programme shows increase in numbers of children with obesity**

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[Read](#)

17-05-2022

**More than a Coronavirus response; why population health should always be high on the agenda**

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[Read](#)

16-05-2022

**Young people's mental health prioritised with funding award**

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[Read](#)

13-05-2022

**Research in coal-mining communities reveals how local histories shape vaccination uptake**

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[Read](#)

[See all news](#)

# Events



08-06-2022  
2:00pm-3:00pm

[Register](#)

## **Greener Primary Care: how can primary and community care start the journey towards environmental sustainability and decarbonisation?**

Are you interested in understanding the relationship between climate change and healthcare? This webinar led by the Primary Care Division in Public Health Wales will provide a background to the current Welsh legislative and policy context in relation to decarbonisation.

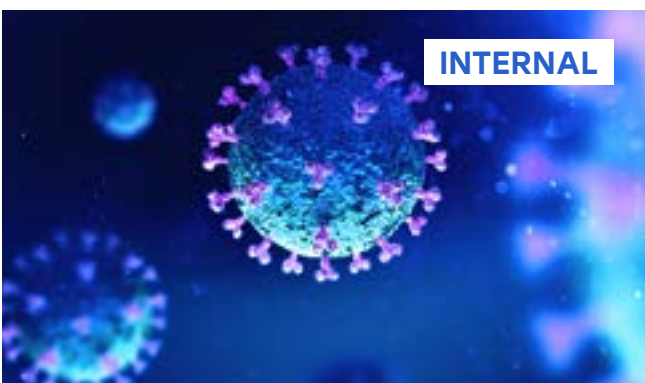


15-06-2022  
2:00pm-3:00pm

[Register](#)

## **Fair work for health, well-being and equity – what should we do? Recommendations from an expert panel**

Panel members will discuss their perspectives on the findings of their work on the Fair Work for Health, Well-being and Equity Report. Join us for this exclusive insight and the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.



06-07-2022  
2:00pm-3:00pm

[More](#)

## **The COVID-19 Pandemic in Wales: Reproductions of vulnerability**

In this webinar we will hear from the team at Swansea University who were part of a consortium of 16 partners and leading the COVINFORM study in Wales.



14-06-2022  
8am-4:30pm

[More](#)

## **Improving Health and Increasing Activity Conference**

This conference will focus on how to adopt a preventative health approach across your community through the promotion and prescription of physical activity.

[See all events](#)

# Topics

[See all topics](#)

- A** Accidents and injury prevention  
Adverse Childhood Experiences  
Air Quality  
Alcohol and substance use and misuse  
Approaches and methods in public health practice  
Arts and health
- B** Behaviour change  
Biodiversity and greenspace  
Built environment  
Cancers  
Cardiovascular conditions  
Carers  
Children and young people  
Climate change  
Communicable diseases  
Community  
Community assets  
COVID-19
- D** Debt and benefits  
Diabetes  
Diet and nutrition  
  
Early Years  
Education and training  
Employment  
Environment  
Ethnicity  
Evaluation
- F** Foodborne communicable diseases  
Fuel Poverty  
Further, higher and tertiary education
- G** Good, fair work
- H** Health in all policies  
Health inequalities  
Health related behaviours  
Homelessness  
Housing  
Housing quality  
Human rights and social justice
- I** Income and resources  
Influenza
- L** Learning difficulties  
LGBTQ+
- M** Maternal and new born health  
Men  
Mental health conditions  
Mental ill-health  
Mental wellbeing
- N** Natural environment  
Non-communicable diseases
- O** Offenders  
Older adults  
Oral health
- P** People  
Physical activity  
Planning  
Poverty  
Precarious work  
Preschool (including WNHPSS)  
Prevention in healthcare
- R** Respiratory conditions
- S** School (Including WNHPSS)  
Sexual health  
Sexually Transmitted Infections  
Smoking and vaping  
Social capital  
Spirituality  
Stress, coping and resilience  
Suicide and suicide prevention  
Sustainable development  
Systems thinking in public health
- T** Transport
- U** Unemployment
- W** Water and sanitation  
Wellbeing of Future Generations  
Wider determinants of health  
Women  
Working age adults



# Next Issue

## Green NHS

