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**NORTH WALES** SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING  
SERVICES IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

# Covid-19 innovations and lessons learned initial findings

## About this report

The Research, Innovation and Improvement Hub has been collecting examples of innovative activity in health and social care during the Covid-19 epidemic in North Wales. This report includes the information received by **20 August 2020** and is being shared as a draft to check whether anything has been missed.

If you are aware of anything else that should be included, please let us know by the **end of September 2020** so we can include it in the final report by emailing [sarah.bartlett@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.bartlett@denbighshire.gov.uk).

## Data collection methods

A [survey was launched](#) in early July 2020, in partnership with the Primary and Community Care Academy, to collect more information about innovations and lessons learned. This includes the collection of stories about the changes that took place using the Most Significant Change methodology. This report includes the early responses from that survey as well as the examples of innovative activities collected to date.

The project is working with the BCUHB Covid Conversations project being carried out by the Engagement team to include the experiences of members of the public in later reports.

The project identified many different surveys taking place about the impact of Covid-19 on health and social care and lessons learned. The project aims to coordinate these to learn from them and avoid duplication. A [Covid-19 reviews and surveys webpage](#) has been created to collate them. The project is also including reviews that have been carried out by services as part of their own lessons learned and improvement processes.

The data collection process is still underway.

## Review findings

### Overall changes

**Remote working and virtual meetings** were used across all priority areas for business continuity and as a way of continuing to deliver some services. Examples submitted included the delivery of housing services, training, carers services, virtual

child protection conferences, recording interviews, virtual fostering and permanency panels. The report produced by the Regional Collaboration Team about holding regional meetings during lock-down includes a review of the different IT solutions used by partners across North Wales.

Staff say this generally works well and has brought forward changes that needed to happen. There is a lot less travelling and some services are now more efficient. Working from home was the change that people most wanted to keep. However, remote working has been challenging for some staff, particularly those who live alone or who have caring responsibilities.

Many services found online delivery worked well and made services more accessible for many people. However, some people who use services have struggled with the technology, online services are less accessible for some people, some miss the human contact and there is an increasing digital divide. People suggested taking a blended approach to virtual service delivery in future, so face to face options are available where necessary.

**Communication, information and advice** was another cross-cutting theme, with many examples of organisations increasing the frequency of communication and pulling together resources for members of the public and people who use their services. Examples included a website of community resources, lists of local food delivery providers and emergency contact details.

**Flexible and adaptable workforce** including redeployment of staff to different roles, changes in shift patterns and office hours, and providing weekend cover. There are some concerns about the sustainability of this, as staff are too focused on supporting others which may lead to burn out.

*“Reduction in bureaucracy when making key decisions – as decisions were often made in a day during the pandemic when often they would have taken weeks or months pre-Covid”.*

## 4.2 Changes by priority area / work-stream

### Prepare for winter pressures

- Redeployment of staff not in key worker roles, to support the Covid-19 response.
- Partnership working groups set up as part of the Covid-19 response.
- Increased the number of hospital social workers to two per District General Hospital.

See also the [voluntary community services](#) that helped support the initial Covid-19 response.

### Safe and redesigned NHS and social care services

- Streamlining of nursing documentation in BCUHB.
- Video call consultations are being rolled out across BCUHB using Attend Anywhere.

- Roll out of eConsult to 54 practices in North Wales, which gives patients a way to contact the practice online, completing a questionnaire which is sent to the practice. The practice will then contact the patient within 48 hours. This helps practices triage patients ahead of calling them and patients do not need to call first thing in the morning to obtain an appointment, as the form can be completed 24/7.
- Development of Ysbyty Enfys temporary hospitals.
- Prehab sessions for patients awaiting surgery involving dietitians, physiotherapists and pre-op nurses are now being delivered for patients receiving urgent bowel, kidney and upper gastrointestinal surgery through video technology and with equipment and information to take home. Keeping in contact with patients remotely has allowed them to continue with the rehabilitation and exercise routines and make sure they are as fit for surgery as possible.
- Covid-19 research: BCUHB have been able to rapidly and safely set up, open and recruit to COVID-19 studies, supported by committed clinical teams, across all 3 secondary care sites and in primary care. A potential facility in North Wales has been identified for vaccine studies.
- A virtual Health Hack was held, in collaboration between BCUHB, the Bevan Commission and M-SPARC on 14 May and 20 May. The Hack attracted 89 attendees and 13 pitches from across Wales. Winners include a project to develop a short-range communication aid for use while wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); a 'Clear Masks for Communication' project to look at PPE design for patients with hearing impairments; an idea to create a virtual community based on the Community Care Collaborative physical hub, where people are supported through informal and friendly conversation to access the support they need through a virtual network of partners.
- Looking at a support package for newly qualified Social Workers

### **Carers – impact and resilience**

- Third and voluntary sector services have been supporting carers by: providing shopping and medication collections; carer groups meeting over video calls and individual phone calls; keeping in touch calls including follow-up calls to 'shielding' letters; food and well-being boxes; providing local databases of support available; sharing financial support available through grant applications and emergency grant funds.
- Local authorities have been supporting carers by: creating COVID-19 support teams to help people in local communities during the pandemic; sharing key national and local guidance and information about available services; keeping an open dialogue with providers to check how things are going, demand and challenges; working with providers to change services to respond to the new needs of carers and give providers a level of autonomy to make changes as needed; sharing of resources to help with where the demand is.
- Local authorities have been working closely with Voluntary Service Council's to coordinate volunteering and community support, which it is hoped will help to identify and reach informal carers, especially in rural areas.
- Providing increased counselling and emotional support.

- Promas provided free courses for carers around staying well mentally, physically & emotionally, offering hints and tips, allowing carers to identify where they may need more support.

### Care sector resilience and sustainability

- Providing iPads for care homes and hospitals to support residents/patients to contact friends and families during the COVID-19. Part of a longer term digital community services transformation project.
- Flintshire Social Workers using WhatsApp to have video access to the condition of homes, when physical visits are not possible.
- Ty Treffynnon care home reopened to provide step down rehabilitation.
- Increased SPOA opening hours to include 9 to 5 Saturday and Sunday.
- Denbighshire County Council created a Proactive Calling Team, a new temporary service staffed with redeployed employees from across the council. The team made calls to shielding residents and residents aged 70 and over during lockdown and kept in regular contact if the resident wanted this. They offered advice, made sure they had access to food and medication and referred to appropriate services. The team also made home visits to shielding residents they were unable to contact and where there was no response at the door they left a calling card. The strength of the project comes from the staff - across the core team, the call handlers, and the wider team. The service pauses from 14 August 2020 but they will be looking at how a service like this could support future temporary needs.
- Commissioning 15 minute care packages in domiciliary care to move people through the system.
- A council provided support to providers through the Hardship Fund.
- Providing Commissioning Manager cover over the weekends to support the care homes.
- Using an individual's resources to support their care and support needs, for example, care workers calling morning and evening and family supporting with lunch and tea.
- A council found brokerage is more efficient than ever because of short waiting lists, real time information about people who are moving through reablement so that brokers can better plan their permanent care package. Social workers are not providing individuals with a set time for each domiciliary call, giving providers more flexibility. Providers are undertaking their own reviews of packages and where necessary handing back hours which are not needed and taking on additional packages.
- A council has seen lower sickness levels and have introduced occupational health support for their staff and the independent sector as well as trauma support for direct care and front-line social services staff.
- Increased monitoring of trends and patterns of referrals, for example, domestic abuse.

*"The care providers have been amazing, in particular care homes who have shown great resilience and determination to keep infection rates low"*

### Provider SWOT analysis

In June 2020 a group of social care and support providers were brought together to discuss and reflect on the shared response to the initial outbreak of Covid-19 in the first half of 2020. This produced the following SWOT analysis as a summary of the key messages (Care Forum Wales, Community Housing Cymru and Cymorth Cymru, 2020).

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience, flexibility and maintenance of the workforce</li> <li>• Inter-organisational communication and partnership</li> <li>• Independent organisational rapid responses</li> <li>• Membership organisations supporting the workforce</li> <li>• Some responses from external organisations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position of the sector going in to the crisis</li> <li>• Perpetually changing guidance and lack of clarity on implementation</li> <li>• PPE availability early on</li> <li>• Testing policy and implementation</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Collaboration outside the statutory sector sometimes lacking</li> <li>• Retaining the new workforce</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships: trust and relationships</li> <li>• Commissioning: outcomes and flexibility</li> <li>• Person centred approaches</li> <li>• Workforce</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business as usual</li> <li>• Temporary loss of demand for services and perhaps collapse of the care home sector</li> <li>• Loss of recognition for the sector</li> <li>• Complacency</li> <li>• Further pandemics</li> <li>• School return</li> </ul>

### What have people stopped doing?

- Delivering care packages to all those who do not fit into a Priority 1 category.
- Day services.
- Respite / carer breaks.
- Social worker placements in some areas (discussions are taking place regionally about how to support students to complete their degree).
- Face to face training.
- QCF observations.
- Reduced monitoring visits to urgent only.
- Delayed opening of new Extra Care facility.
- Home visits (unless requested by families) although resumed once restrictions changed adhering to social distancing and using PPE.

## Mental health

- Conwy Mind set up a Virtual Hub and counselling services through the lock-down, using emergency funding from the Steve Morgan Foundation.
- The Isle of Anglesey invested an additional £50,000 in the Parabl service to provide additional capacity for bereavement and mental health services. This included counselling sessions, CCBT serenity sessions, virtual 'coping with life' and 'mindfulness' sessions.
- Anglesey links with PCSOs who have local knowledge and are aware of residence who have may mental health needs, including dementia. This has resulted in older residents who are self-isolating feeling reassured by (socially-distanced) checks on their well-being.
- ICAN support provided over the phone following a referral, after volunteers were taken out of GP surgeries and unscheduled care due to Covid-19. Have now had 700 referrals across North Wales and each area has 12 to 15 volunteers providing support. A lot of support is available to volunteers. Tuesday afternoons have been set aside for training. Support is available for any escalation and after every call if needed, but a minimum of one supervision every 2 weeks. There is also a once a month Zoom supervision for volunteers to speak to each other. People's ratings from before and after the support shows that it does help to improve their mood.
- Remote delivery of Active Monitoring (CBT based guided self-help) which has included adapting materials for online delivery and has been successful so far.

*"Isolation and inability to continue with routines affected people with Dementia. Loss of confidence of going out of the home now evident."*

## Learning disabilities

- Technology. The use of technology has increased, including use of digital platforms such as Zoom/Facebook/What's App video. Engagement with social media, short videos, Facebook live and so on has increased, enabling more direct contact and correspondence with the community. Some areas made IT equipment available to some citizens in residential care and supported living through ICF funding and others and where this was provided, it proved beneficial. Online activities such as quizzes, bingo, discos (mostly provided by the third sector organisations, person centred practice and advocacy groups), have worked well for people with Learning Disabilities and their carers. They provided routine activities for citizens, respite for carers, and invaluable contact for all. Citizens, families and providers reported that routines, including routine virtual activities, were crucial to minimising the negative impact on wellbeing and feelings of isolation.
- Collaboration. Peer support and sharing of information, within the third sector worked well. These organisations proved to be more agile and adapted to lockdown quicker than some.
- Easy read guidance has been helpful for families and individuals. Advice and support from organisations such as All Wales People First, Learning Disability Wales, North Wales Advocacy Association, Mencap Mon, STAND, Conwy

connect and many others has been circulated via social media and has been invaluable in informing families of rights and regulations, particularly when these issues were complex.

- Direct Payments. Those with Direct Payments in place have been able to continue a level of support for individuals with Learning disabilities, albeit the use of those payments has been impacted by the availability of staff, fears around the vulnerability of individuals and families through having contact with support workers and so on. There are also unresolved issues around payments of retainers that need to be considered in Local Authority teams.
- Provider forums in Denbighshire and Anglesey Mon were cited as being helpful in the support of providers.

### Children and young people – early help for struggling families

- The NEWid Ap has been developed for a while but its use during this period has increased. The Ap enables us to do work virtually with children and families and for it to be sent to the computer of the worker.
- Providing free school meals to eligible students through direct payments.

Continued to plan the Emotional Health transformation work-stream which includes:

- A co-produced meaningful integrated framework with guiding principles for supporting the healthy development of emotional health, wellbeing and resilience of children and young people aged 0 to 18 years, that is relevant and applicable across all organisations, encompassing the 5 ways to wellbeing, using a digital presence. The aim of the work stream is to reduce the escalation of need and risk, improve personal outcomes and build capacity for all children and young people. Identifying need at the earliest point and providing the appropriate information, advice and assistance and early help where required can delay or prevent escalating need that can otherwise often be costly. The project will trial the framework by establishing a small number of priorities in terms of age range / developmental stage, setting focus, and around Children and Young People's emotional health, taking into account the current pandemic situation. The pilot will test the concept of the framework and provide something useful that will help people now, before the full framework is complete.
- FRIENDS Resilience: The FRIENDS Resilience programmes are cognitive behaviour theory (CBT) based programmes, endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as best practice for the prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression, promoting resilience in families, schools and communities. Whilst this is a fantastic resource to support children and young people it is not available through the medium of Welsh. Working with the developer, the work stream will create a bilingual app that can be used across schools and communities in Wales to promote mental health and emotional resilience amongst children and young people in their language choice.
- StayWise: StayWise was successfully launched in England in 2002, having been developed through a partnership between Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Kidde Plc over a two-year period. A website was created which hosted the collective educational resources of many emergency

services. North Wales will be the first area in Wales to pilot the website. The work stream is delivering a bilingual version of the StayWise website aligned and cross-mapped to the Welsh Curriculum, and combining the resources of the emergency services and other associated bodies to provide a more effective, consistent and holistic approach to applied learning.

### **Coronavirus and Me Survey**

This survey found that the majority (58%) of children and young people said that they felt happy most of the time and a large majority (84%) report feeling safe most of the time. Overall 2% said that they have 'not very often felt safe'. The things that have had the most impact on how they feel are; not being able to spend time with friends, not being able to visit family members and school or college closing (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020)

### **Children and young people – safeguarding and care**

- Anglesey have been holding a semi virtual fostering and permanence panel. The Fostering and Permanence Panel meets in order to discuss, conclude and come to a recommendation on matters relating to Foster Carers Registration and re-approval, and to consider matching in terms of Permanency.
- Using zoom and other technologies to have fully inclusive Child protection conferences, with improved attendance and participation from parents and families (who find it less threatening) in Wrexham.
- Continuing to deliver the Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) project in the East. Recruitment, training and service delivery to families along with Steering Group and clinical supervision meetings were delivered remotely via online platforms. Home visits commenced at a social distance. The team are working with 11 families on a 24/7 basis and having excellent results and feedback to date from the Police, Social Workers and Youth Justice. One case has been discharged from CAMHS as it was felt MST met their needs more appropriately. Three children were about to move to become Looked After but due to their family's participation in MST, have been able to remain at home.
- In the West: adapting to Covid by developing a training programme for staff across a range of backgrounds to improve staff abilities to effectively work with children and families on the edge of care. We are intending to provide the training both virtually and in person where possible and also the interventions both virtually and in person where possible/ necessary. We are also working alongside the third sector to develop a community resilience scheme which will focus on helping with recovery from Covid, allowing families an opportunity to reintegrate into their communities in a safe and positive way and engage with community members and local authority and health staff. We hope that this form of early help will help to prevent issues escalating and developing higher levels of need for these families.
- In the Central area: Meadow Lodge Multi-Disciplinary Team – A team that will provide intensive therapeutic intervention to children and young people who are at the edge of care, aiming to prevent them becoming looked after. The team is aiming to be fully operational at the start of September. The recruitment and set up of the team has continued throughout COVID-19. Weekly team meetings,

introductions and induction has happened virtually, this has allowed the individuals to come together as a team without being able to meet in person. Team members have also been recruited through a virtual interview process. Complex Needs Intervention team – This team will deliver intervention in the early stages of a complex behavioural problem. The team will adopt a ‘No Wrong Door’ approach and will work with children and young people that have either not yet been diagnosed or have had a diagnosis but there is limited help available to manage the behaviour. The team will be recruited throughout August and September and will be operational in October. The project team (which includes representatives from CCBC, DCC and BCUHB) have met virtually through and will be undertaking the recruitments virtually. Both of these projects are considered important as they will be targeting support for vulnerable children and young people with the lockdown period. Both project teams are also looking at innovative new ways of interacting with the service users, this has resulted in budget allocation for iPads which will be loaned out to the families during the interventions to improve communication whilst limiting face to face contact.

- Launch of new virtual engagement tool ‘Mind of My Own’ for all children to provide their wishes and views.

### **Housing, homelessness and prevention**

- In response to the increase in the likely demand for domestic violence services the Isle of Anglesey County Council have invested additional money in the GORWEL service, our local domestic violence support service. The additional investment of £40,000 will mean additional capacity within the service that GORWEL provides by employing a new family officer. We have also, in partnership with GORWEL, North Wales Police and Anglesey Council Children and Families Services, developed a plan to relocate domestic violence offenders away from the home rather than moving victims and their children to shelters.
- Anglesey housing management officers undertaking frequent over the phone contact with vulnerable tenants and escalating any issues / concerns.
- Anglesey Supporting People internal housing support service are establishing a private Facebook page for their service users to interact, support each other, with staff support and monitoring.
- In Anglesey a number of housing staff have been deployed to deliver on the community action plan. This action plan holds 60 actions which are delivered by council officers, Medrwn Môn and Menter Môn. These actions include the delivery of community-led volunteers. The creation of two pop-up food banks in order to cope with the increase in demand for food parcels.
- Medication pathway (Anglesey): This is in partnership with our local health board, Medrwn Môn and adult services. Medrwn Môn, through the ICF Funded Local Asset Co-ordinator project has an outstanding relationship with the local GP Cluster group and Lead Pharmacist. The medication volunteers will be provided with PPE and also high vis council jackets in order for pharmacies to establish they are volunteers – some chemists have queues that could take 2 hours to be seen (one in one out) and this could waste volunteer time. The medication volunteers are council staff, staff from the Wallich and Cais – all DBS checked.

## Community services integration and ICF

- Community Resource Teams have extended their hours.
- Medication pathway (Anglesey): This is in partnership with our local health board, Medrwn Môn and adult services. Medrwn Môn, through the ICF Funded Local Asset Co-ordinator project has an outstanding relationship with the local GP Cluster group and Lead Pharmacist. The medication volunteers will be provided with PPE and also high vis council jackets in order for pharmacies to establish they are volunteers – some chemists have queues that could take 2 hours to be seen (one in one out) and this could waste volunteer time. The medication volunteers are council staff, staff from the Wallich and Cais – all DBS checked.
- Anglesey community pack: developed for the network of 400 strong volunteers who have come together in each community. This pack includes information regarding guidance for volunteers, information on scammers / fraudsters and what to look out for alongside other useful information such as template letters.
- Denbighshire is supporting a national campaign pulled together by Welsh Government about how to help people who are staying at home because of coronavirus. The Looking Out for Each Other campaign focuses on the small things we can all do to help each other during the pandemic. It provides practical guidance about how everyday tasks, like running errands or simply staying in touch, can be done safely, without physical contact to minimise the risk of contracting coronavirus. It will also share information about how to stay mentally and physically active. A new online hub – [gov.wales/safe-help](http://gov.wales/safe-help) includes a 'helping hand' card, which can be downloaded and put through the letterboxes of neighbours to offer help to those who are isolating. We will be promoting the 5 simple ways you can help, as long as you do so safely: Help with food shopping; Run errands; Keep in touch; Encourage people to stay mentally and physically active; in local online communities.
- Wrexham Community Agents: confirmed two new agents ahead of the planned start dates, with another one advertised at the moment to ensure county wide coverage of such a valuable support service. We are looking to use part of 2020/21's budget to cover extra hours for agents to work over the agreed working hours to support current demand. This will be for 2 months, pending review. A member of the Commissioning & Contracts Team is now volunteering as the new Community Agent for Holt, Isycoed and Abenbury to provide support to residents of this area while Penley Rainbow Centre has been unable to recruit. This role is being carried out in addition to their daily workload within the Commissioning & Contracts Team. The Community Agents are doing a fantastic job, they have adapted well to changes in normal working ways and have been a key source of support for those who are vulnerable and isolated.

### Service coordination

- Emergency contact centre and emergency phone line: Anglesey County Council have developed an emergency contact centre, utilising existing staff whom refer any resident for the appropriate service they require. 4. The Council has opened up a 10 option emergency line with option 2 Adult services and option 4 (01248)

750057 will provide advice and support for all residents, but especially the vulnerable and isolated members of the Island's communities.

- In Anglesey discussions are underway to ensure all Single Points of Access / service entry points are working harmoniously to reduce any risk of duplication. We have an individual working from home logging all community referrals and cross-referencing with other SPOA referrals – in the event we see a frequent name / household on this database, this could indicate quite early on that there are underlying issues, which may require additional support. The support may entail a referral to our financial inclusion team and / or welfare rights team. Demand of this service will be reviewed daily to ensure there is sufficient capacity to respond promptly and effectively to all enquiries. This service is accessible 7 days a week during the Covid-19 pandemic to support the Island's residents and communities.
- Gwynedd: A new team "Tîm Cymorth COVID-19" has been set up in the five areas covered by the Community Resources Teams.
- Information is available on Gwynedd's website of services set up in the local community to support people locally in the pandemic. Mapping of these services has been carried out by the local authority to try to identify any areas where there are gaps and local councillors are being asked to help arrange support services.
- Conwy have developed a website to list [community volunteer groups and businesses](#) that are doing deliveries such as shopping, meals and prescriptions. The site is not Conwy-specific so anyone can add resources across North Wales and Conwy will provide log-in details to other SPoA teams wishing to use it.
- Daily Covid calls in Conwy West Cluster, consisting of GP practices, social services, mental health and community nurses.

### Food providers

- Anglesey: A list of Island-wide suppliers of food has been drawn up, gone online and can be accessed by families who may live away from their older parents, thus allowing them to directly order food and deliveries from the comfort of their own home.
- Anglesey have applied for grants to boost food bank resources. Creation of two pop up food banks in Llangefni and Menai Bridge to ease the pressure on the existing two food banks.
- Conwy have put together a list of local providers who are offering home delivery of groceries or meals in the area.

### Voluntary community services

- Neges programme, food parcel deliveries: Menter Môn, Dylan's Restaurant, the Isle of Anglesey County Council and other organisations have been working on a programme where we arrange for food to be produced at the Dylan's food centre in Llangefni (they can produce up to 1,000 meals a day) and these will be distributed to the homes of vulnerable people.
- Anglesey joint Covid-19 co-ordinators group across statutory and third sector organisations. The Council and the third sector led by Medrwn Môn (CVC) and Menter Môn (organisation working with the business sector and community) are working to mobilise Covid-19 community support groups on the island. The

co-ordinators group have developed a Covid -19 community guidance and other important information. The link also includes contact details of community co-ordinators and food delivery companies. All the online information is available to individuals through hard copies or contact with the community volunteers.

- Anglesey volunteering and buddy system: A natural buddy system has occurred in most communities. For example, the older person self-isolating builds up trust and comfort with the support provided by the volunteer who does shopping or may take their dog for a walk – this provides re-assurance and appears a positive approach to providing emotional support at a very difficult time. Volunteers buddying up with older residents whom are building strong, trusting relationships and can support with shopping and dog walking – for example, the author of this report is also a community volunteer in her spare time. She has been providing weekly shopping to a lady aged 91. This lady speaks Welsh and so does the volunteer. The lady has been re-assured by the support of the volunteer as she knew her grandfather and has fond memories of her grandmother – any barriers or concern broken down and the lady feels re-assured by having her weekly shop undertaken by the same volunteer each week.

## **References**

Care Forum Wales, Community Housing Cymru, Cymorth Cymru, 2020. Provider SWOT analysis of the initial month Covid-19 response.

Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020. Coronavirus and me survey results July 2020.