

Changing for the Future

Public Engagement

on

Our Proposals for Hydrotherapy Services following Covid-19

Who are we, and what do we do?

Swansea Bay University Health Board runs your local NHS services in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas, specialist services for South West Wales and some very specialist services for people from further away. We plan and provide services provided by family doctors (GPs), dentists, chemists and opticians as well as providing community services such as district nurses, therapists, school nursing and health visiting.

About 390,000 people live in Swansea Bay and we employ approximately 12,500 staff and spend around £1billion every year on providing health services for our population.

In all of this we work closely with patients, their families and carers, the ambulance service, local authorities, universities, and the voluntary sector.

What is this engagement about and who should read it?

This engagement is about changing our hydrotherapy services going forward, to support the development of each of our main hospitals as Centres of Excellence for specific services and to ensure we can provide improved services for our patients, improve the sustainability of our services, and use the resources we have most effectively.

What hydrotherapy services did we provide prior to the pandemic?

Swansea Bay currently has 3 hydrotherapy pools situated at each of our main three hospitals – Morriston, Singleton and Neath Port Talbot.

These pools are used to support relevant patients in the management of a range of debilitating short and long-term conditions. Some examples of patient groups that access the pool as part of their rehabilitation include those affected by Stroke, Parkinson's, Multiple sclerosis, Haemophilia, Learning Disabilities, Cancer, Muscular-skeletal fractures or injuries, persistent pain, post-operative orthopaedic surgery (both adults and children), Cerebral Palsy and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.

Hydrotherapy offers the opportunity to perform activities or exercises within water. These exercises/ activities are guided by a physiotherapist and form part of a wider rehabilitation programme, it is not a standalone treatment. Performing these exercises within the hydrotherapy pool can benefit patients as the water offers buoyancy, reducing body weight and supporting patients as they move. In addition to this the pools are at least 33 degrees in temperature, the warmth of the water offers both pain relief and encourages relaxation, this is particularly beneficial for some patient groups. Both the temperature of the hydrotherapy pools and their access options (e.g. hoists) make them unique to any pools within community leisure facilities. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which advises the NHS on the effectiveness of treatments, recognises hydrotherapy as a treatment tool that can be used as an aid to rehabilitation.

We have reviewed capacity and usage of these pools on all our sites pre Covid 19. On average the pool facilities were open for use for approximately 5-6hrs per day, on a Monday-Friday basis. Within these bookings not all sessions were fully utilised.

The health board pools are maintained and monitored by both the estates staff and the physiotherapy staff on each site. This involves daily testing of both temperature, water clarity, acidity, and chlorine. This is in line with national guidelines. It also ensures the pools are maintained at the temperature of 33-34 degrees (compared to local leisure pools which can be between 26-31 degrees).

Singleton Hospital

With its own separate entrance, nearby disabled parking, and short walking distance to the pool, this offers the easiest access for our patients and the community. It has capacity for 6 service users and a therapist in the pool at any one time. Its combination of size and location on site means that it is best suited for community and group access. It was opened in 1990. An arrangement is in place to hire out the hydrotherapy pool, at a small charge, to community groups and voluntary sector organisations for sessions in the evenings.

Neath Port Talbot Hospital

The pool is also well situated for out-patient access and has capacity for 3 service users and a therapist in the pool at any one time. It is our newest pool, having opened in 2003.

Morrison Hospital

This pool is our largest and oldest pool, having opened in 1985. It can accommodate up to 8 service users and a therapist at any one time. However, it is poorly situated for out-patient or community access as it is located in the centre of the hospital, meaning that it is more difficult to get to, particularly for some of the patient groups involved where mobility is affected. Prior to the pandemic, in spite of its access problems, this was used for outpatients and inpatients.

How we changed services to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic

When the Covid-19 pandemic started early in 2020, the NHS in Wales worked hard to identify how its services could change to support the expected rise in the number of patients we would need to treat. As a result, a number of changes were made to physiotherapy services, which included hydrotherapy services:

- All pools were temporarily closed in March 2020 in line with Welsh Government guidance to stop routine activity and staff were temporarily redeployed to cover ward areas.
- In May 2021 the pools at Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals reopened, operating 7 hours a day on average, with all sessions Monday to Friday utilised. Advice from infection prevention and control on procedures for both of these pools have allowed these to be used.
- The pool at Morrison Hospital has remained temporarily closed based on infection prevention and control advice due to the higher

risk of Covid-19 infection on this site as most Swansea Bay patients who haven't been pretested for Covid-19 are admitted to Morriston and the location of the pool requires patients to travel across much of the site to access the pool.

- Due to the underutilised capacity at the pools at Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals it has been possible to enable all patients who require hydrotherapy across Swansea Bay to receive this treatment even with the continued temporary closure of the Morriston pool.

Feedback from Engagement on Changing for the Future – Our Plans for Urgent and Planned Care (July to October 2021)

The engagement on Changing for the Future – Our Plans for Urgent and Planned Care after Covid-19 which ran from July – October 2021 outlined how our three main hospitals would be recreated as Centres of Excellence for different services:

Morriston Hospital for emergency or urgent care, specialist care (where critical care required) and regional surgical services

Singleton Hospital for planned care, cancer care, maternity, and diagnostics

Neath Port Talbot Hospital for orthopaedic and spinal care, diagnostics, rehabilitation, and rheumatology

The engagement also asked people their views on whether they agreed with the principle that “healthcare should be local where possible and

specialist where necessary” – with over 90% of those who responded agreeing with this.

The engagement also asked people for their views on Hydrotherapy services, as follows: “We currently operate a hydrotherapy pool at each of our three main hospital sites and we want to consider future provision of these services based on a centre of excellence approach, i.e. by reducing the number of sites with a hydrotherapy pool but improving the level of service provided, or potentially by providing this in alternative facilities, such as leisure centres, as is the case elsewhere in Wales. We recognise the importance of these services, but we note that they are all resource intensive. We would therefore welcome your views on how we should provide these services to a higher standard in fewer locations.”

Feedback in response to this question outlined the following issues:

- More provision was seen as necessary, particularly for those suffering with certain conditions.
- Hydrotherapy should be offered in as many sites as possible.
- Utilising leisure centres would not be appropriate as these pools are not managed in the same way as hydrotherapy and do not provide the same therapeutic benefits.
- Concern about a “cut in hydrotherapy” as it is used on all three sites for different patient groups - conditions and ages.
- Need for clarity over how to access hydrotherapy and whether this is via GPs or can be from patients.

- Whilst most people only need hydrotherapy for a short period of time, some would benefit from this for the long-term where they have lifelong or degenerative conditions.
- Some patients would like the option to pay for more frequent access to the hydrotherapy pool where it benefits their condition(s).
- Important that access to hydrotherapy for children is retained.
- Comments were also made about the Morriston pool being past its best and the facilities and service at Neath Port Talbot and Singleton Hospitals being good.

The Health Board, in partnership with the Swansea Bay Community Health Council, considered the outcome of the our engagement about Urgent and Planned Care after Covid-19 at its meeting on 28th October. The Board agreed the proposals could go ahead, with some additional actions to address the concerns raised as part of the feedback. It was agreed that further work would be carried out on how we provide hydrotherapy services in the future, building on the feedback received through this process.

What are our proposals for changing hydrotherapy services?

Building on the intention to develop each of our main hospitals as a Centre of Excellence in their own right and the feedback received from the previous engagement process, it is important that we consider how the provision of hydrotherapy can best fit into this direction of travel so

that we can improve access to these services and provide them to a higher standard.

As our proposals for urgent and planned care are implemented, this will result in our most ill patients being cared for at Morriston. Where patients need rehabilitation prior to returning home, they will be transferred to Neath Port Talbot Hospital, which is going to be our Centre of Excellence for Rehabilitation. Therefore, we would anticipate that inpatients requiring hydrotherapy as part of their rehabilitation will do so at Neath Port Talbot Hospital in the future, not Morriston Hospital.

Children generally almost always attend hydrotherapy as outpatients and therefore would be accommodated at Neath Port Talbot or Singleton Hospitals depending on where they live.

Neath Port Talbot Hospital is also planned to become the Centre of Excellence for Orthopaedic and Spinal services and would therefore also offer hydrotherapy for these inpatients as required for their rehabilitation.

Singleton Hospital is planned to be the Centre of Excellence for Womens services and so hydrotherapy services would be provided there for suitable patients, for example Aquanatal, women prior to and after their pregnancy and Gynaecology.

We also want to expand access of outpatients and communities to hydrotherapy services. Both Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals offer good access to patients visiting their sites and so will be available for these individuals. We also want to encourage the use of these pools by community groups and voluntary sector organisations, and so are

proposing extending the arrangement for hiring the Singleton pool to the Neath Port Talbot pool as well.

Therefore, we are proposing:

- That we should use our Hydrotherapy pool at Neath Port Talbot Hospital for all inpatients requiring this service for their rehabilitation prior to returning home.
- That we should use our Hydrotherapy pools at Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospital for outpatients and rehabilitation for relevant patients after they return home.
- That we will make the Hydrotherapy pools at Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals available out of NHS operating hours for hire by community groups and voluntary sector organisations.
- That the Hydrotherapy pool at Morriston Hospital should close permanently, as the inpatients who have traditionally received a service there will now do so (in line with the new Centres of Excellence being developed) at Neath Port Talbot Hospital instead. Patients attending Morriston historically on an outpatient basis have already been transferred to receive their hydrotherapy at Singleton or Neath Port Talbot Hospital, depending on which is easier for them to get to.
- As a result, it is proposed that the area of Morriston Hospital freed up, in the middle of the hospital site, will be used to locate other services which can only be on the Morriston Hospital site and which are needed there in order for Morriston to fulfil the role of the Centre of Excellence for urgent and emergency care for Swansea

Bay. Specifically, the Health Board is looking at the possibility of using this area to enable Fracture Clinic services to be relocated back from Neath Port Talbot Hospital (where it was temporarily moved during the pandemic to reduce footfall at Morriston Hospital) so that this service and the associated Plaster Room can be provided alongside the Emergency Department at Morriston Hospital to provide a central hub for support regarding orthopaedic emergency and urgent care.

- To provide improved services across the Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hydrotherapy pools for the whole of Swansea Bay, the number of hours each pool operates for will be increased from 5-6 hours a day (9-3pm) to 8-10 hours a day (8am – 6pm), with all sessions utilised. This equates to an increase of 11% of activity across the 2 pools compared with when the 3 pools were operating.
- Currently all patients requiring hydrotherapy are being accommodated within the two currently operating pools (i.e. as Morriston's pool is still temporarily closed). To cope with any expansion in demand, the Health Board will lengthen the operating hours Monday to Friday from 9am – 3pm to 8am – 6pm as well as considering making the service available for hire over weekends.
- Provide further specialist training to staff to allow a wider range of physiotherapists to support the Hydrotherapy services, supported by a Swansea Bay clinical lead for these services.
- Work with our Local Authorities and local leisure centre providers to provide training and support to offer aquatic therapy within some of their community pools. This 'closer to home' model would help

support members of the public to improve their health and wellbeing.

We would therefore recommend these are the two pools that remain open.

Concentrating activity over the two pool sites will enable us to develop an increased level of expertise for our patients and health board population, whilst enhancing overall access.

How will we get to the hydrotherapy pools?

We know that when we put services on fewer sites this can sometimes cause difficulties when people need to use our services, especially for people who do not have access to a car or are dependent on public transport. Both Singleton and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals have good public transport links. We are currently working with the voluntary sector to look at how we can offer alternatives to improve access to several health services and this would be part of these discussions.

What about the money?

These changes are about making sure we provide the highest quality services possible in the most appropriate place and with the best staff in appropriate environments. We need to make sure we are living within our means and using all our resources – money, staff, and buildings, as efficiently and effectively as possible. Swansea Bay University Health Board has a budget of about £1billion every year. However, we are

currently overspending this budget and so we have to make sure we're using all of this public money wisely and to best effect.

Excluding staff costs, running our hydrotherapy pools costs around £103,126 per year. The Morriston pool costs £53,356 per year. By reducing our hydrotherapy pools from three to two we will realise savings of £53,356 each year, which will be put towards running all the other NHS services we need to provide for Swansea Bay residents.

In addition the Health Board intends to purchase a new hoist for the Singleton Hospital pool at a cost of £13,000 as well as replacing the heating and hot water system.

Summary of our proposals

What are the benefits and drawbacks of these proposed changes?

Detailed below are some of the benefits which should be delivered by these proposed changes:

- Improved access with increased capacity allowing more patients to be treated
- Dedicated slots for different patient groups
- Concentrating staff resources on fewer sites will allow more hydrotherapy staff to develop expertise which in turn will improve the service patients receive
- Improved options for long term self-management by linking with more patient support groups and enabling pool hire out. This will

allow more of our population with chronic conditions to access our pools and self-manage on a long term basis.

- Supporting ongoing recovery by linking with local leisure facilities. Empowering our patients with the confidence to access their own local facilities will give them more flexibility to take an active role in their own rehab and potentially progress further and /or quicker.
- Some patients will have hydrotherapy at locations closer to their homes

Detailed below are some of the disadvantages which could arise from these proposed changes:

- Some Out-Patients may have to travel further to access facilities
- A small number of Morriston Hospital in-patients may lose access, including a handful of patients receiving critical care. However the development of centres of excellence will promote early discharge from Morriston Hospital so they can attend hydrotherapy at Singleton or Neath Port Talbot Hospitals as outpatients depending on where they live or patients being transferred to Neath Port Talbot Hospital for specialist rehabilitation.

What will happen to staff affected by these proposed changes?

The proposed changes outlined in this document will be managed in line with the agreed Organisational Change Policy and there is no risk to the employment of any member of staff affected. For some of our staff this

will mean a permanent change of base for their work. Any staff affected by these proposed changes will be provided with the available options for moving into existing vacancies or working in other areas with their individual needs addressed as far as possible.

What about the impacts on equality groups?

We need to make sure that any decisions we make following engagement ensures we understand and take account of any impacts on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the new socio-economic duty, introduced on 31st March 2021, means we need to also actively consider the effects of these changes on increasing inequalities both nationally and locally. Therefore, we have produced an Equality Impact Assessment on these proposed changes which we will also engage on alongside this document.

What do you think of these proposed changes?

In partnership with the Swansea Bay Community Health Council, the NHS Watchdog for our area, we will be discussing these proposals with our patients, their carers, the public, politicians, and partner organisations. It is important that we get as many views as possible on these proposals for change.

The engagement period runs from 20th December, 2021 until midnight on 18th February, 2022.

We have agreed the range and scope of engagement with the Swansea Bay Community Health Council and will also be using events being run

by partner organisations to talk to people (either virtually or in person) about the proposed changes in hydrotherapy services.

The outcome of the engagement and all the responses received will be considered by the CHC and Health Board. Based on this, decisions will be made about whether the proposed changes can be implemented or whether further public consultation is required.

You can let us know what you think by:

Writing to us: Chief Executive
Swansea Bay UHB
One Talbot Gateway
Baglan, SA12 7BR

Emailing us: SBU.engagement@wales.nhs.uk

Phoning us and leaving us a message: (01639) 683355

Contacting us on Facebook: Swansea Bay NHS

Twitter: @SwanseabayNHS

We have produced a response form so that it is easier for you to respond to this engagement. We would appreciate you filling this in and sending / emailing it to the contact points listed above.

Alternative versions of this document, in Welsh, large print (English and Welsh), audiobook (English and Welsh), British Sign Language video, Easy Read and Braille are available at <https://sbuhb.nhs.wales/about-us/public-engagement-consultation/> and you can request these by ringing 01639 683355 or by emailing us at SBU.engagement@wales.nhs.uk.

Because of the pandemic we will keep under review our ability to provide face to face opportunities to discuss these proposals and get their views as we normally do. However instead we will be hosting a series of sessions where we will explain these changes and be able to answer your questions and hear your views on these issues. A list of these events will be found on our website, and we will also be publicising these on social media.

Alternatively, you can let the Community Health Council know your views by:

Writing to them:	Swansea Bay Community Health Council Cimla Health and Social Care Cimla Neath SA11 3SU
Or emailing them:	swanseabay@waleschc.org.uk