

# Bay Health

Staff newspaper of Swansea Bay University Health Board



## Kev's tribute to staff after cancer fight



Swansea entertainer Kev Johns (left), pictured last winter as Nanna Penny in his 25th panto, *Beauty and the Beast*, with co-star Matt Edwards. At the time, he was receiving treatment for cancer

What a difference a year makes... popular Swansea entertainer Kev Johns can vouch for that!

This timer last winter, panto legend Kev was in the throes of a battle

against cancer. But after receiving treatment from the 'incredible' staff at Swansea Bay, the star is now looking forward to another Grand Theatre panto season, having been

told all signs of cancer in his body have gone.

**Turn to page 9 for Kev's story and his heartfelt tribute to our brilliant team.**

SCAN BARCODE FOR A SELECTION OF BAY HEALTH STORIES ONLINE



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



New recruits and new role give maternity services a lift

**PAGE 10**

Fantastic orthoplastic... teams join forces to cut waits

**PAGE 4**

Delivering on digital as Swansea Bay leads way with cutting paperwork

**PAGE 3**

# Joined-up approach key to easing 'front door' pressure



Innovation, change and a joined-up approach are essential to tackling the unrelenting pressure on our urgent and emergency care services.

With ambulance queues and delays hitting the headlines, Chief Operating Officer Deb Lewis has praised those at the sharp end for their sterling efforts. But she added the

knock-on effects across the whole system mean "there's no single answer".

So focus is intensifying on embedding right care, right time, right place through alternative and enhanced pathways and a radical drive to free up patient flow, with a particular focus on discharge. Interim Joint Medical Director Anjula Mehta said a huge

amount of change had already taken place. But we must continue to innovate, change and refine our approach as there's no let-up in the additional pressures we are facing. And while these are now year-round, the colder months are guaranteed to bring an even greater influx of patients to our front door."

Patient flow in focus: Pages 6&7



Dr Richard Evans, Swansea Bay University Health Board Interim Chief Executive

Welcome to another packed edition of Bay Health! As usual, this edition features an incredibly broad range of stories that help illustrate the amazing work our staff do on behalf of the Swansea Bay population. I'm certainly inspired by what I've read and I hope that you will be, too. This edition is published at a time of significant pressure for the Health Board.

We're facing significant pressures when it comes to our urgent and emergency care services. Our Emergency Department (ED) is often extremely busy and this can result in lengthy ambulance handover delays. None of us is happy with this in terms of the experience of those people who are waiting to come in to the department

and, crucially, we recognise that there will be sick people waiting for an ambulance and we need to release crews so that they can get back out into the community. That's why we've introduced a Continuous Flow model at Morriston where patients are transferred from the Urgent and Emergency care areas up to the wards at set times of the day in order to free up space in the ED so that ambulances can offload. Adopting this approach creates some 'flow' in the system and helps us spread the balance of risk more evenly across our Health Board. My sincere thanks to everybody who's supported the continuous flow work to date – initial feedback about the positive effect it's having overall is encouraging.

The root causes of the pressures we face are numerous and complex but there's no doubt that if we were able to discharge patients who are medically fit in a more timely way we'd go a long way to relieving the pressure. That's why we're working with our local authority partners to speed up the way in which care packages are assembled and that's why we need to plan for a patient's discharge from the very moment they are admitted. Our Virtual Wards are a big success story here, with eight wards catering for 30 patients each, meaning that we have the equivalent of an extra 240 beds in our system. I know the feedback from patients is extremely positive, not least because they're getting the care they need in the comfort and familiar surroundings of their own home. To cope with the pressures we also need to make sure that the public are aware of the range of different ways

in which they can access the health and care system so that they can choose services appropriately. And there's quite a few services to choose from – outside our hospitals we have GP surgeries, 111, Out of Hours GPs and Community Pharmacies while inside we have services such as the Minor Injury Unit at Neath Port Talbot Hospital, which patients can access directly, and the Same Day Emergency Care service and our Acute Medical Unit at Morriston Hospital, to which patients can be referred via a number of pathways. So if your friends or family need to access healthcare in the weeks and months to come, please help them choose the most appropriate route in.

We face some difficult financial decisions following the Welsh Government's recent announcement regarding revised budgets for Health Boards across Wales. Despite additional Welsh Government investment, we still need to make significant savings by the end of March next year. Delivering these savings will be difficult and we will need to make some tough choices. We're not alone in that – all of the Health Boards across Wales are in a similar position. Our aim is to do this by having as little impact as possible on the care we provide and to ensure that no matter what decisions are made that we are able to maintain the safety of our services. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Bay Health.

If you would like to suggest things for us to cover in the next edition, please email [swanseabaycomms@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:swanseabaycomms@wales.nhs.uk)

## UK first solar farm fits the bill

A first of its kind solar farm, helping to power Morriston Hospital, has generated enough energy to cover the cost of nearly £2million-worth of electricity since it was launched in 2021.

Swansea Bay University Health Board has saved £1.86m in energy bills by using the power generated by the solar farm based in nearby Brynwhilach Farm instead of purchasing it from the grid.

Equally important is the reduction on the health board's carbon footprint, with a saving of 1,933 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e - the equivalent in miles of 521 flights from Cardiff Airport to Sydney - underlining its impact from an environmental perspective.

Des Keighan, Assistant Director of Estates, said: "The team and I are still immensely proud of what has been achieved.

"We were the first hospital in the UK with its own direct wired solar farm to supply green, sustainable energy to a healthcare facility.

"It's a shining example of being forward-thinking and identifying innovative ideas to deliver a range of benefits to our health board.

"As a healthcare provider it's important we respond to our obligation to protect health, the environment and public finances."

The solar farm uses 10,000 panels across its 14-hectare site and supplies approximately a quarter of Morriston's power, which is particularly important at a time when energy prices have reached record highs. Its success has meant it is already paying back part of a Welsh Government loan, while it has sold energy back to the grid since it went live in November 2021.

The solar farm was intended to cut the health board's annual electricity bill by £500,000, but a combination of summer sun and the rise in energy prices saw a



Morriston Hospital's solar farm is now leading to big savings in energy costs

saving of over £175,000 in May this year alone.

It cost £5.7million to build, but the energy savings it is already generating mean it won't take long before it has paid for itself, and will then continue to cut energy bills year on year.

Mr Keighan added: "The solar farm has been a huge success in the two years it has been operational, and the savings in finances and emissions really prove that.

"Those two factors are really important. "Our savings

coincide with the rising costs of electricity, and in terms of carbon emissions, it is at a time when it's more important than ever to look after our environment.

"As a health board, we are determined to continue reducing our carbon footprint and the solar farm has helped us enormously in that respect.

"Moving forward, we will be looking at ways of building on our success and we are excited to see what the future holds for the solar farm."

## Bay leads on digital delivery to help free staff from paperwork

Progress on digital innovations which are helping to cut waiting times and save NHS Wales money have been welcomed by the Health Minister Eluned Morgan.

On a visit to Neath Port Talbot Hospital she saw first-hand how a new digital ward concept is transforming time-consuming documentation processes for healthcare staff and patients.

Key to this are two new digital systems which are being rolled out across Wales, the Welsh Nursing Care Record (WNCR) and Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (EPMA).

They are saving time and improving efficiency, bolstering patient safety and quality of care, and saving money for health boards.

EPMA provides an electronic system for the prescribing and administering of medicines for patients in hospital.

In the Swansea Bay University Health Board area, it has:

- Saved more than 2,000 hours of prescriber time each year from rewriting lost, missing or full medication charts at Neath Port Talbot, and a further 3,600 hours a year at Singleton Hospital.
- Reduced the time spent on individual drug rounds per nurse, per ward by 10 minutes at Neath Port Talbot and six minutes at Singleton.
- Saved 3,300 nursing hours per year searching for medication charts at Neath Port Talbot and 5,600 hours per year at Singleton.
- Significantly reduced errors associated with medicine prescribing and administration.

All other health boards will start implementing the system from 1st April 2024.

The WNCR allows staff to record, share and access patient information electronically across wards, hospital sites and health board areas. It has also standardised information collected about adults in hospitals.

All health boards and most hospitals across Wales are now using the electronic nursing record, with the remainder set to come on board by March 2024.

Swansea Bay has also developed its own electronic system for patient flow, called Signal. This is further helping to improve patient safety and remove delays in patient care. Other health boards in Wales are interested in adopting the system.

Signal keeps a digital eye on patients from their admission to hospital, to their discharge. It makes staff involved in their care aware of any support they need to leave hospital as soon as they can. This includes details of a package of care they might need before they can leave.

The system is used across Swansea Bay to support online board rounds carried out by clinicians looking after patients. It means every member of the team involved in a patient's care has the information available digitally, in real time, no matter where they may physically be.

Signal also provides hospital management with an



The Minister (right), pictured with Nursing Digital Lead Liz Williams (main image). Meanwhile below, left, Dougie Russell, Unit Medical Director for Singleton Hospital and Orthopaedic Consultant Surgeon, explains the benefits of moving from a paper-based system to a digital one and right, Director of Digital, Matt John, explains the benefits of the digital systems



overview of what's going on in all the clinical areas. It gives vital real-time information about capacity across all health board sites, and helps to identify areas which may require additional support.

Health Minister Eluned Morgan said: "The benefits of the new digital systems we are funding are clear to



see. They are streamlining administrative processes for healthcare staff and allowing them more time to focus on patient care.

"Innovations such as this are exactly the sort of solutions we need to implement to ensure an NHS that is fit for the future."

## Reducing waiting times

(From left to right): Orthopaedic nurse practitioner Sian Francis; plastic surgery fellow Eva O'Grady; consultant orthopaedic surgeon Rhys Clement; consultant orthopaedic trauma and limb reconstruction surgeon Piers Page and consultant plastic surgeon Nick Marsden



# Teamwork makes the dream work for fantastic orthoplastic service

Surgeons in Morriston Hospital are working together in a way that is unique in Wales to save people's limbs after serious accidents.

The orthoplastic service brings the expert skills of orthopaedic and plastic surgeons and their support teams together – avoiding the need for patients to have separate operations.

Morriston has a highly accomplished team of orthopaedic specialists and is home to the Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery.

The combined approach was undertaken on an ad-hoc basis for many years. However, it was formalised with the launch of the South Wales Trauma Network in 2020.

It saw University Hospital of Wales (UHW) in Cardiff become the region's major trauma centre for adults and children. Morriston was designated a trauma unit with specialist services, including plastic surgery. This availability of both plastic and orthopaedic expertise, working collaboratively, is what makes the orthoplastic service possible.

The team comprises 10 surgeons, evenly split between orthopaedic and plastics – all with a sub-speciality interest in limb reconstruction – along with other highly trained staff.

Consultant orthopaedic surgeon Rhys Clement said: "The acute work is mostly open fractures. These are fractures where the bone has come out through the skin and caused devastating bone and soft tissue

injuries. We need both teams to work together to fix the bones and cover the bones with soft tissue reconstruction to salvage the limb.

"Most of the open fractures we see are from road traffic collisions, motorbike accidents, falls from heights and people falling from horses.

"Occasionally, we see sporting accidents, but road traffic accidents are most common, followed by fall from heights. People up ladders, scaffolding, rock climbers falling off cliffs – that sort of thing.

"As we're near the South Wales coast, we do get quite a few rock climbers coming here."

Mr Clement said if the casualty had an isolated limb injury they would go straight to Morriston. With multiple injuries they would go to UHW to have life-threatening injuries managed first. Those requiring further work to salvage limbs would then transfer to the Swansea hospital. Morriston's five plastic surgeons between them provide daily cover at the UHW Major Trauma Centre, so are involved in these cases from the start. "It avoids a situation where patients have an orthopaedic procedure and then get referred for plastic surgery," said Mr Clement. "The idea is to bring it together and do it as a joint procedure."

Consultant plastic surgeon Nick Marsden said: "Once the bone injury has been fixed, it is essential we provide immediate robust soft tissue coverage of the bones and metalwork. This reduces the risk of infection and increases the chance of the bone healing and saving the limb. It is why we work

simultaneously together in theatre. Most of these patients require complex soft tissue reconstruction, whereby we take healthy tissue from another part of the body that is expendable and transplant it to the limb to cover the defect.

"This involves reattaching the blood vessels of the transplanted tissues into blood vessels in the leg using microsurgery. The patients are then monitored in specialist areas within the plastic surgery unit in Morriston, by highly trained nurses and allied professionals."

The service has its own dedicated operating theatre lists on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, during which orthopaedic and plastic surgeons and the wider team work together in a way that is unique in Wales.

Orthopaedic nurse practitioner Sian Francis said: "It's just the one theatre but it's dedicated to us on those three days.

"As they can be lengthy procedures, if you were to put them on a general trauma theatre list, nobody else would get their operation that day."

Another important aspect of the orthoplastic service is the specialist follow-up of these injuries.

The team has two combined orthoplastic clinics each week to ensure patients have the appropriate follow-up. Complications like bone infection or fractures not healing can be identified and appropriately managed. The team also receives referrals from across South Wales for patients with bone or fracture-related infections needing specialist orthoplastic input.

"Our aim as a multidisciplinary team is to try to get these patients to as close to their pre-injury state as possible, so they can return to work and go back to living normal lives" said Mr Marsden.

**"It avoids a situation where patients have an orthopaedic procedure and then get referred for plastic surgery."**

**- Rhys Clement**

## Recruitment and finance

November/ December 2023 ISSUE 07

# Bay becoming destination of choice for medics

Swansea Bay is fast becoming the destination of choice for doctors from at home and abroad.

Last year saw the arrival of 157 new doctors, including 79 from overseas.

The health board's efforts to showcase the positive work/life balance, together with the training and professional opportunities available for those working in the area, appears to be paying off.

Debbie Eytayo, Swansea Bay's Director of Workforce and Organisational Development, said the pleasing trend was the result of careful planning.

She said: "Over the last few years we've been quite proactive and carried out some successful targeted recruitment work, particularly to fill some hard to recruit to posts."

These endeavours are being helped by positive feedback from existing staff.

She added: "One of our strengths is that opportunities in Swansea Bay UHB are being promoted by word of mouth. The doctors who like working here speak positively about the organisation to their peers.

"In addition to our overseas doctors, we are attracting doctors from across Wales and the rest of the UK.

"We appointed 157 doctors in the financial year 2022-23, of which 79 were recruited from overseas."

Phillipa Hughes, Senior Medical Workforce Advisor, agreed word of mouth is key.

She said: "I think we have a good reputation and there is word of mouth from the doctors who are coming to us - they feed back to friends and colleagues. I think that really does help. They look to



New recruit Mohammed Addin, pictured outside the main entrance to Morriston Hospital

come and work here as well." Branwen Cobley, Deputy Medical HR Manager, said support was in place to help new arrivals get up to speed. "We support the individual and encourage them to attend teaching and training opportunities that are in place for our training doctors," said Branwen.

"We look at the previous experience the doctor has had and develop an induction package."

Mohammed Addin joined Morriston Hospital's

cardiology department in September having made the difficult decision to leave his home country of Yemen to enhance his medical training.

The 32-year-old said: "What immediately captivated me about joining this team was the presence of numerous consultants renowned for their expertise at Morriston Hospital.

"The entire experience was nothing short of exceptional."

# New nursing recruits set to save £8m by reducing agency bills

Morriston Hospital is expected to reduce costs on agency bills by around £8m by the end of the financial year due to the health board's successful drive to recruit more nursing staff from home and abroad.

The cost reduction is particularly timely, with Welsh Government asking for further cost-cutting for the remainder of the financial year, with the expectation that more will be needed next year.

Since late January, 118 new nurses from overseas (some pictured, right) and 123 student nurses from Swansea University have taken up posts to significantly drive down vacancies, which stood well in excess of 200 at the start of 2023. Beyond filling the workforce gaps, the overseas recruits have significantly boosted diversity, allowing Swansea Bay to tap into the expertise of staff who have experience of working in other countries and integrate new skills and fresh perspectives, all of which benefit care provision.

The health board has also continued to support and encourage local nurses with the significant influx

from the city's university. New arrivals have naturally needed time to bed in due to induction processes and – in the case of staff from overseas – assimilation into the NHS and life in Wales in general. There are also obvious costs associated with adding more staff to the permanent wage bill, plus additional outlay from bringing nurses to the UK and also taking new staff on from university. But with many of the recruits

now on the roster at Morriston, a cost reduction of around £8m is expected on the £21.2m outlay from the last financial year (22/23), with the hope that all vacancies will have been filled.

"The biggest impact of the recruitment process has been on agency usage, which we'd expect," said Swansea Bay Principal Project Manager for

Finance, Roddy Boobyer. "We've been targeting taking agency shifts out of the picture, not so much reductions in bank staffing and overtime. The latest numbers, regarding nursing agency spending at Morriston, are last year we spent £21.2m and we are looking at a reduction of £8m for this year. When the

new overseas recruits join us, they have four weeks of training, they then sit a clinical examination but if there is the requirement to re-sit, then more training is provided. All nurses attend corporate induction and there is a supernumerary period while on the wards, so it does take time.

"But we've clearly made great strides this year. And the benefits financially will be even greater next year because we won't have all the supernumerary costs from the new people coming in."

Beyond the financial, the influx of new, permanent staff is having numerous positive impacts, not least around morale, productivity and patient care.

"This time last year and to an extent the early part of this year, we had such gaps in our substantive workforce so we were massively reliant on temporary staff, whether that be bank but predominantly agency," said Ceri Matthews, who is Interim Unit Nurse Director for Morriston Hospital.

"I think it is really difficult coming to work every day when, for example, you're one of two substantive staff members.

"Above all, happy staff who feel part of a team and also feel valued will increase quality and safety of care for our patients."



# Explained... how joined-up approach is helping to embed right

Urgent and emergency care services have been intensifying efforts towards embedding right care, right time, right place, as the depths of winter approach.

This means continuing work towards reducing the pressure on the Emergency Department (ED) by diverting patients to alternatives when possible and placing a greater emphasis on community services to support admission avoidance and discharge.

These initiatives, together with our Wales-leading pilot of Continuous Flow, which schedules patient movements from the assessment unit onto medical wards throughout the day, are coming together under a cohesive drive aimed at improving performance in unscheduled care.

"The situation at our front door remains extremely challenging and we should give credit to the sterling efforts of those at the sharp end," said Deb Lewis, Chief Operating Officer.

"We are rightly focusing a large part of our work on reducing the queues of ambulances outside the Emergency Department so they can return to answering 999 calls.

"But that's one piece of the puzzle. We know the pressure has knock-on effects across our integrated health service, which is why there's no single answer.

"Therefore we are taking a holistic and joined-up approach."

Central to this is the Acute Hub at Morriston Hospital, which is approaching its first anniversary.

The hub, just inside the main entrance, is divided into two parts; Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) and the Acute Medical Unit (AMU).

SDEC, where primary and secondary care meet, provides care to ambulatory patients with a range of conditions. They can be referred here by their GP, by ED or by clinicians reviewing the calls that have been made to the ambulance service, what is known as the 'stack'.

The aim is to give patients early access to review and decision making, avoiding in-patient admission where possible. Next door is the AMU which has a mix of trolley and bed spaces, with many of these dedicated to frail, elderly patients.

This is Morriston's second front door, a dedicated facility for those medical patients who need to be seen urgently, but don't need the highly specialist life-saving care in ED.

AMU offers high-quality, senior assessment and care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the aim of minimising the length of stay within the hospital, ensuring only those who need more specialist care access specialist ward-based teams.

Aiding patient flow from AMU is the new Continuous Flow pilot, a tried and tested approach to maintaining patient flow, which has been adopted and adapted



## How community services are evolving to help

### Virtual Wards

Virtual wards offer wraparound care closer to home - where patients really want to be.

Rather than a ward being made up of hospital beds, the patients' own beds become part of a virtual ward, meaning they still receive the same level of care but in the comfort of their homes instead of a hospital.

They provide holistic, patient-centred, high quality care through rapid assessment; multidisciplinary team involvement and effective partnership working between GPs and other primary care professionals; hospital staff, social care workers and third sector colleagues. The MDT discuss how to plan and manage each patient's care, ensuring face-to-face assessment and intervention is completed.

Our virtual wards play a crucial role in reducing avoidable hospital admissions and supporting earlier safe discharges of patients from hospital.

They help to provide support for those living with frailty; elderly people, and those with complex health and social care needs.

Hands-on care to patients continues to be provided as before, but in the comfort of their homes, rather than in a hospital.

Each of our Local Cluster Collaboratives (LCCs) have their own virtual ward, made up of staff including doctors, nurses, pharmacists and therapists.

By each bringing their areas of expertise to the table, the teams can work together to help keep patients at home, safely discharge them out of hospital sooner and prevent avoidable hospital

admissions by supporting them to stay well at home. Since their introduction at the end of 2021, they have already prevented hundreds of hospital admissions.

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admissions by supporting them to stay well at home. Since their introduction at the end of 2021, they have already prevented hundreds of hospital admissions.

### ACTs

Our Acute Clinical Teams (ACT), based in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, provide short-term care to frail patients who would rather be in their own home. They can also call on other teams to provide treatment in the home, like physiotherapy.

The teams bring what are traditionally hospital-based assessments, treatments and investigations, such as point of care blood tests, a range of IV treatments or home oxygen, into the community.

They prevent unnecessary acute admissions and can help speed up the process of being discharged from hospital. Staff also work with paramedics to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, received from 999 calls. However, if patients are taken to hospital, the teams can also help to get them home sooner.

They provide a comprehensive medical assessment and management plan, including investigations and a medication review, as well as monitoring and offering various treatments to patients.

This paired with being able to offer physiotherapy, occupational therapy, home care support and onward referrals, all help towards keeping patients as well as possible at home and avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions.

### New roles for district nurse: Page 11

community. The Older Person's Assessment Service (OPAS) is co-located at the front door and delivers early comprehensive assessments for frail, elderly patients presenting with acute conditions.

This allows a better understanding of the needs of this vulnerable patient group and often facilitates supported discharges back to the patient's residence. Another major development to enhance the frailty pathways has been the advent of eight Virtual Wards across the health board area, with each ward looking after up to 30 patients in the community.

The Virtual Ward clinical service model provides face-to-face, wrap-around care in the patient's own home or care home, which is delivered by a multi-professional team.

GPs, pharmacists, therapists, specialist nurses and third sector colleagues meet online regularly to review a patient's care, but the actual care is provided hands on where the patient lives.

Virtual Wards also provide an in-reach service at Morriston Hospital, which will identify existing in-patients for an earlier discharge in to a community

# up approach is care, right time



Virtual Ward where the patient's ongoing clinical and wider needs will be addressed by the multi-disciplinary team.

The in-reach team will also facilitate clinical discussions with colleagues in ED and AMU to avoid admission of frail, elderly patients presenting at the front door who could be safely cared for in a Virtual Ward.

Being cared for at home by Virtual Wards is much better for the patient's overall physical and mental health and costs around £40 per day, as opposed to a conservative estimate of £150 to £180 per day in hospital.

In addition the Home First service supports frail, elderly patients to stay at home or facilitates safe and early discharges via multi-disciplinary and integrated services which provide proportional assessments and support to either help patients continue their recovery at home or in a step-down bed or care home, if they have more complex needs.

This helps to free up beds for those patients coming

in. If a patient is cared for in hospital, once discharge has been arranged they can be taken to Morriston's Discharge Lounge, which is staffed by qualified nurses and healthcare support workers. Here, patients can wait in comfort where they can be observed and receive their regular medications and to take out medication (TTOs) while they wait for transport home. But care doesn't stop at the back door, with those who

need it able to access clinical care in the community.

The Acute Clinical Team (ACT) is a hospital at home service which sees patients in their own homes and nursing homes, providing continuing treatment for a range of serious conditions including infections and exacerbations of heart and chest problems or during

recovery from falls.

ACT also has a rapid response and intervention function, where it can take patients who are at high risk of hospital admission and have been referred on by a variety of services, including GPs, social services and paramedics. Despite all of these initiatives, there

**"We know the pressure has knock-on effects across our integrated health service, which is why there's no single answer"**

- Deb Lewis



Main picture, staff at SDEC's main reception, top, a general view of AMU and above, patient Geoff Wheeler pictured being looked after by a member of SDEC staff

are still lengthy delays for some patients who require on-going care or support on the community.

The health board continues to work alongside colleagues in the local authority to create additional capacity to ensure patients can stay safely at home where possible or are discharged with the right level of support. One of the more recent initiatives was the Patient Assignment Team where a social worker was part of a joint team with community and hospital clinicians to provide advice and guidance to early and effective discharge planning as early as at the time of admission.

This improvement project showed significant increases in discharges within ED and AMU and the health board is working towards implementing this support for patient flow over seven days in the next few months.

"We've transformed our front door and built in appropriate support all along the patient pathway where multi-disciplinary teams work effectively to improve care and patient experience," said Anjula Mehta, Interim Joint Medical Director.

"But we must continue to innovate, change and refine our approach as there's no let-up in the additional pressures we are facing and while these are now year round, the colder months are guaranteed to bring an even greater influx of patients to our front door."

## Leading the way

# Safety first as Swansea Bay duo create lifesaver national course

A Swansea Bay father and daughter team have created a new UK-wide training resource which could prove to be a real life-saver.

Paul Lee, Head of Medical Equipment Management Services (MEMS) and his daughter Jordan, who has no formal medical training but holds an MA in English Literature, have worked together for more than a year in their spare time to create an e-learning course and 70-page workbook to train staff in the safe handling and use of medical gases and cylinders used in healthcare.

The training, which went live in September, has been added to the National E-Learning For Health portal, an award-winning website with more than two million registered users providing online training for health and social care staff across the UK.

The duo decided to put their heads together and create the online training and workbook due in part to Paul's experiences while working as a UK-wide patient safety lead in 2017.

"I was investigating accidental deaths with medical devices and one of the deaths I investigated, believe it or not, was around the use of a medical oxygen cylinder because someone didn't know how to switch it on correctly," said Paul.

"Because of their design, staff have not known how to use them and oxygen cylinders have been involved in a number of patient fatalities and hundreds of near misses. We believe this course will be the go-to for all staff, pretty much, who work in the NHS."

The course builds upon training Paul had previously devised for Swansea Bay, which was subsequently adopted by health boards across Wales. The Covid pandemic, when the extensive use of oxygen became the norm for many health care staff, served to heighten Paul's concerns that a deficit in knowledge



Father and daughter team Paul and Jordan Lee with some of the course material they've created

was putting patient safety at risk. So following a request for help he decided to take the bull by the horns and fill the knowledge gap, a task made significantly easier thanks to the help of Jordan and an organisation called the National Association of Medical Device Educators and Trainers, which Paul himself helped establish in 2011.

Paul said: "Over the last ten to 15 years I've developed lots of useful resources, training, videos and all sorts of materials that have been shared among colleagues

in Wales and England who have had literally no provision for this. The need is there. This is a training resource which is very cleverly designed, with hyperlinks, links to other training and once people have successfully completed the online training, they then get access to download a personal copy.

"Working with Jordan has been a synergy... she's got to the point where she almost knows what I'm going to be asking next. Over 300 hours of work has gone into it; evenings and weekends."

## Cluster project helping meet complex health and well-being needs

A service that helps people with complex health and well-being needs while taking pressure off GPs has received national recognition.

The Cwmtawe Pathway Service offers support to those struggling with substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse, including sexual violence. Its support can also extend to family members.

The pilot project is funded by the Cwmtawe Local Cluster Collaborative (LCC) and works in partnership with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS). It provides patient-centred care by working with each person to agree meaningful interventions that tackle their unmet needs or issues.

It was introduced in 2021 after mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse were identified as three areas where the cluster wanted to provide additional services. The service has now gained national recognition after being shortlisted in the 2023 NHS Wales Awards. Project co-ordinator Cara Lougher (pictured) said: "The service provides person-



centred care to individuals who usually have multiple unmet needs. They are typically people who have been seeking support from their GP but often require further support. We aim to make sure people with poor mental health, who struggle with substance misuse or are domestic abuse victims feel supported and cared for."

Initially, an assessment is carried out to understand each person's individual issues and needs. A bespoke package of support is then put together relating to the needs and goals that person would like to achieve or would need support with.

They are then given one-to-one support which can include education around trauma, sleep and nutrition, help with getting support from local authorities or mental health team, help to navigate appropriate services – and more.

"The service offers quite broad support to fit whatever is needed for each person and we offer support to families who are affected too, whether it's children or

parents and carers," Cara added. "Part of a support plan could involve working with someone on their well-being, which could include working with a GP, nurse or prescribing team.

"Then there is a sustainable element where we help them to access longer-term support from our key partners, such as substance support or domestic abuse services." The introduction of the service has resulted in a 60 per cent reduction in the demand on GPs, as well as a 98 per cent increase in patients having improved access to other sources of support. seventy people, including family members, benefited from the service during its initial 18-month period.

The service is now hoping for further success after being shortlisted at the NHS Wales Awards, in the Delivering Person-Centred Services category.

Mike Garner, Cwmtawe LCC lead, said: "We invested in this project which has clearly proven its benefits to patients and the NHS as a whole. We couldn't have anticipated it would be as successful as it has been and that is all down to Cara and the team."

## Cancer services

November/ December 2023 ISSUE 07

### Swansea team spells out tell-tale signs of rare cancer

A dedicated team that treats a relatively rare but highly aggressive type of cancer is urging people to be vigilant for the tell-tell signs.

Sarcoma is an uncommon cancer of the connective tissue of the body such as fat, muscle, nerves, blood vessels and bone. There are many different kinds, which can affect any part of the body.

Historically, though, it can be challenging to diagnose. In fact, many GPs will see only a handful of cases during their professional career.

The real challenge is working out which of the many presenting lumps is possibly malignant.

Fortunately, Wales has a well-structured and well-resourced sarcoma service whose role is to find and treat these worrying lesions. Oncological treatment is delivered in two Welsh cancer centres – Singleton

and Velindre. Some people require specialist surgery, which is undertaken in Swansea, where the South Wales Sarcoma Service multidisciplinary team (MDT) is based. It reviews dozens of cases every week to decide on the best treatment.

Consultant plastic surgeon Thomas Bragg took over as sarcoma lead for ABMU Health Board – Swansea Bay's predecessor organisation – in 2015.

"The service was not in very good shape for various reasons," said Mr Bragg. "We have worked hard to evolve the service considerably, now recognised as delivering high quality care in a number of areas.

"We are not shy about confronting challenges, continuing to fight for our patients. If people want to know what best practice looks like for an MDT team, they come here to see ours. It's a service

Wales should really be proud of." Although based in Swansea, the MDT team can call on the expertise of healthcare professionals across Wales for its weekly case meetings. And as well as working with professionals within NHS Wales, the MDT also has very close links with a specialist centre in Birmingham where highly specialised surgery for bony and retroperitoneal surgery is undertaken.

Mr Bragg said the red flag signs to look out for are a lump bigger than five centimetres that felt deep, was rapidly growing and might feel painful.

He said sarcomas could be in any part of the body, including the abdomen or head and neck, but were generally more common in the limbs.

He also encouraged anyone with a lump they had concerns about to contact their GP, who could refer them for an urgent ultrasound scan.



Kev Johns MBE has spoken publicly for the first time about the cancer treatment he received, in order to thank the "incredible" staff in Swansea Bay for saving his life.

The beloved entertainer and broadcaster - best known for being the voice of the Swans and regularly starring in the Swansea Grand Theatre panto - recently revealed he had been receiving treatment for the disease over the past 18 months.

Thankfully, the 62-year-old is now cancer free after a course of immunotherapy followed by surgery; but at one point he wondered if he would see another Christmas.

A routine blood test in March 2021 highlighted an iron deficiency and a subsequent CT scan revealed the star had an unexplained mass on one of his kidneys.

Kev, who didn't display any major symptoms, said: "They sent me for an endoscopy followed by a CT scan.

"The day after, the wonderful doctor telephoned me and said, 'I could have put this in writing but I know you were worried, so I wanted to tell you that there is something on your kidney.

"The first question I had was, 'Is it sinister?' She said it was."

Following the news, Kev faced a nervous wait for the diagnosis but he was determined to continue life as normal. He said: "I was in a field in North Wales filming an episode of an American comedy show written

by the guys who write Saturday Night Live – it was probably one of the biggest jobs of my life and I had this hanging over me."

Kev was then sent for a biopsy that confirmed the worst.

He said: "When I saw the oncologist in Singleton she told me that I had stage 4 cancer.

"They felt that they couldn't cure it as although it was on a kidney, there were lesions on my lungs as well, which prevented them operating. But she said: 'Don't worry. There's lots of treatments to manage it'."

Coming to terms with such a diagnosis is something Kev will never forget.

He said: "Initially, it didn't sink in. I just thought: 'I will be fine. They will sort it out'."

"Then the oncologist told me he wouldn't be able to cure it. And I see it written down that it's a bad form of cancer.

"I thought: 'Will I see Christmas? Should I take my family on holiday?' Which I did. I took them all away. "I went through all of that."

Kev made the decision to keep the news private, and got on with the show by starring as Nanna Penny in his 25th Swansea panto, Beauty and the Beast.

He said: "Initially, I kept it to myself. A lot of people get cancer. I'm no different to anybody else. I didn't want any conversations when I was in the supermarket. I

just wanted to get on with it. People told me from the beginning to keep my positivity. I've stayed positive throughout.

"I was fit enough to keep working so I did the pantomime. On my day off from panto I had treatment. Everyone else went down the Gower or to Joe's for ice cream." Kev received weekly immunotherapy, which improves the immune system's natural ability to fight the disease, in Singleton Hospital's Chemotherapy Day Unit (CDU).

He said: "It is the most amazing place. They are the most incredible team of nurses and assistants – I can't thank them enough."

Kev knows that he was offered some of the best treatment available, through the NHS.

He said: "Every time I mention immunotherapy, people say that it's a game-changer.

"One minute the doctor is saying they can't do the surgery they would usually do because there were these lesions on my lungs. The miracle is, they all cleared. The tumour shrank. And the doctor is saying, 'Let's talk to the surgeon and see if he can do the operation.'"

"Six weeks ago I went to Morriston Hospital and had the op. The staff were just amazing. There are no signs of cancer in my body at this moment in time. My treatment will continue, even though I'm okay, until they finish the cycle. Just to make sure."

# Maternity service boosted by arrival of new midwife recruits

Swansea Bay's maternity service has received a significant boost after welcoming 11 new band five midwives who have started work with us over recent weeks.

These new arrivals represent a key step forward for health board as we work to ensure effective, safe midwifery services with a £750,000 investment over the next two years.

Leaders and staff alike have been working hard to develop and implement proposals for a revised midwifery staffing model so that the Birth Centre at Neath Port Talbot Hospital and our home birth service can both re-open after staffing pressures led to their temporary closures in July 2021.

The reinstatement process has been under way since the start of October with both services scheduled to be fully up and running again early next year.

Over recent weeks, Swansea Bay has also been

recruiting a number of band two staff as we look to supplement other recent additions to the team, including 14 maternity care assistants, who will allow midwives to spend more time performing the brilliant role that only they can do.

A further organisational change process has also now been completed to reconfigure community midwifery services, while discussions have been held regarding reconfiguring the delivery of community midwifery services in partnerships with our primary care clusters, with any changes being developed early in 2024, for public engagement later next year.

These are all positive steps as we look to modernise and expand one of our most pivotal services.

- We have received some amazing, heartfelt comments for our wonderful maternity staff. You can find the recordings on the 'values' section of our intranet but in case you've missed them, find a selection of the messages below:

**"Our experience on Ward 20 has been amazing. After a very long stay, I can honestly say the staff are fantastic, always really warm and positive and just a tremendous help for me during this time. I've learnt so much from them. I'll always be grateful to them..."**

**"Our midwife was amazing, the whole team was amazing."**

**"All the staff have been really supportive and helpful. Thank you..."**

**"I can't thank the midwives enough for all the help and support I've received. I was given reassurance over and over. They were understanding and sympathetic..."**

**"I'd like to say a big thank you to the kind, caring and professional midwives on the ward. I felt looked after and all my worries were put at ease."**

**"The midwives were amazing and using the pool room was a lovely bonus."**



## New clinic delivers key support for mums-to-be

Pregnant women experiencing issues such as anxiety and low mood can receive support through a new dedicated well-being clinic.

Preparing for a new addition to the family can often be an exciting yet daunting time for parents, whether it is their first time or not. The introduction of the well-being clinic in Singleton Hospital aims to help reduce any anxiety or distress mums-to-be may be experiencing during their pregnancy.

The new service offers women six sessions where they can talk about any issues or worries they may have before learning about various coping techniques. It is run by Swansea Bay's first perinatal mental health specialist midwife, Ann-Marie Thomas.

She said: "We found that we had a great and robust service for women who have or develop severe mental health issues, with our perinatal mental health service.

"We noticed there was a larger group of pregnant women with mild to moderate mental health issues but there was no dedicated perinatal mental health support within maternity. Very often people can get overwhelmed and emotions can start to become heightened and anxiety and low mood can start to be a problem. We introduced the well-being clinic which

provides listening spaces for these women."

If expectant mothers are deemed as needing additional support, midwives can refer them to the well-being clinic during their pregnancy. Ann-Marie goes through a scoring checklist to understand how they are feeling and what issues or worries they are experiencing. It is hoped that by the end of the six sessions, each woman's levels of anxiety will have noticeably reduced.

Ann-Marie worked with hospital-based psychologists to produce a pregnancy and well-being booklet that is used in tandem with the sessions.

She said: "We explore things such as overwhelming emotions, the link to the mind and body and talk about what stress and anxiety looks like in our bodies.

"Then we move on to mindfulness, which is where we aim to train our bodies to feel a different way and use grounding techniques to help calm down.

"We also talk about what has helped them at home to feel calm and safe and how they can replicate that outside of their home." In the short time the clinic has been running, Ann-Marie has already received plenty of positive feedback and has seen a noticeable reduction in the women's distress levels week-on-week.

## New Band 4s to give insulin in boost for district nursing

Swansea Bay's District Nursing team is celebrating after nine staff were recruited into new Band 4 Assistant Practitioner posts, allowing them to give insulin to patients in their own homes.

The initiative, which follows a Welsh Government directive, supports the work of the District Nursing service which currently undertakes 178 insulin visits a day.

Until now, only registered Band 5 district nurses have been able to carry out this care. But upskilling healthcare support workers and assistant practitioners has enabled them to support these visits, for patients who meet a certain criteria.

This allows registered Band 5 district nurses to instead spend more time delivering the higher level care which only they can do.

A lot of time, effort and resource has gone into

updating policies to ensure the implementation of this service improvement. Having more staff trained to give insulin injections will not only free up registered staff to do more specialist work, but it will add resilience to community services.

If a community nurse can't get to a patient who needs their insulin in time, then it can result in real harm to that patient. With a growing demands within community services, the addition of more staff with these important skills is key to delivering a sustainable service.

Paula Heycock, Head of Nursing for Primary Care, said: "This is a significant turning point for the service and Swansea Bay and an amazing achievement.

"People have worked so hard for us to reach this point, and I want to thank everyone involved."



A member of staff pictured administering an insulin injection

# Improving infection control is fundamental to our ambitions

Reducing episodes of patient harm caused by healthcare acquired infections is one of our five Quality Priorities. It is impossible to eradicate every bug and germ but we must ensure that we are well informed and knowledgeable and follow best practice guidelines. Here's how we're aiming to step up our fight against HAIs...

Healthcare acquired infections are episodes of patient harm. These infections cause pain and suffering for patients, often extend their length of stay, which in turn impacts on waiting lists, costing the health board millions of pounds per year.

Our 10-year vision is to become a High-Quality Organisation, so doing all we can to avoid healthcare acquired infections is fundamental to this ambition.

All staff have a role to play in preventing these episodes of harm which occur in our hospitals and community settings. It is often the simplest actions that can make the difference to patients.

Our population is aging and many have other health issues, which increase their risks of acquiring infections such as C. difficile. This is reflected across Wales where nearly all health boards are reporting C. difficile rates in excess of the Welsh Government target of fewer than 25 cases per 100,000 population. In Swansea Bay, the case rate is currently more than double the Welsh Government goal at 51.26 per 100,000 population.

Previously, only those staff who had contact with patients were required to undertake level 2 training. However, in recognition of the importance of infection prevention in protecting our patients and staff, and the health board's commitment to driving down infection rates, the Executive Team has mandated that all staff must undertake Infection Prevention and Control Level 2 training annually. This underpinning knowledge will help everyone to provide high quality, safe care for



Following the latest guidance on hand hygiene is one of the fundamentals of reducing the threat of healthcare acquired infections

patients and reduce episodes of harm.

IPC level 2 covers the 10 elements of standard infection control precautions that must be applied to all patients, in all care areas, at all times, by all staff. Standard precautions are the basic principles such as hand hygiene, use of PPE, risk assessment for patient placement and environmental cleanliness which, when used appropriately, help to protect our patients and each other.

Whatever your role, level 2 training will give you the knowledge and understanding to help you play your

part in keeping our patients safe. The training will also help you to recognise poor practice and give you the confidence to challenge it. At some point, any one of us may be a patient or have a family or friend access our services. If it was your relative in that bed, wouldn't you want them to have the best possible care? We all have a contribution to make to deliver safe, high quality care.

- For more information, or to discuss how you or your team can have an impact, speak to any member of the Infection Prevention and Control team, who will always be happy to help.

## What's on

### Dates for your diary



Nov 16

**Mindful Menopause - 2-3.30pm (MS Teams)**  
Contact Occupational Health and Staff Wellbeing to book a place on this course

Nov 20

**End of Life Champion introduction day - 8.30am-4pm, Morrision Education Centre**

The End of Life Parasol service have arranged an End of Life Champion day, to give an introduction into End of Life care. Contact sbu. endoflifeparasol@wales.nhs.uk for details.

Nov 21

**Care and Treatment Planning CPT training for registered staff.**  
To book please email Liz.Mann-Aprea@wales.nhs.uk and provide your name, employee number and email address.

Nov 29

**District Nursing Skills Day - 9-4.30pm, Port Talbot Resource Centre**

This event takes place in the main training room. To book on to this course, please contact your team leader or admin team.

Nov 30

**Neath Port Talbot Hospital - 21st birthday event**

Dec 6

**Digital Communities Wales**

**Training, 10-4pm, Morrision Hospital**

There will be limited spaces available for this training event, so booking is advised. To do so, email: library.morrision@wales.nhs.uk.

Dec 6

**Health Tactical Silver Commander Training - 2-4.30pm, Morrision Hospital Coordination Centre**

Major Incident/ Business Continuity Incident Training. Target Group – Health Board Tactical Staff and staff who undertake 'Silver on Call' arrangements. Please email SBU.EmergencyPreparedness@wales.nhs.uk to request a place on this course.

Dec 18

**REACT Mental Health - How to have psychologically savvy and supportive conversations with colleagues. 9.30-11 am, on MS Teams**

REACTMH® is a tool, developed by experts at March on Stress, which aims to help you have psychologically savvy and supportive conversations with a colleague about their mental health. Contact Occupational Health and Staff Wellbeing for more details and to book on to the course.

For more events for your diary, log on to the events listings on the SBUHB Intranet.

## Holy days and celebrations coming up this season

Christmas is just around the corner, but there are lots of reasons to celebrate and come together this season. Here's a look at some of SBUHB's dates for your diary for the weeks ahead:

Our brilliant Sharing Hope initiative is working with Morrision's staff library to put on a number of Cake and Colour therapeutic art events this winter.

The sessions will take place at the staff library between 10am-12pm on the following Fridays -

Nov 24; Dec 1, 8 and 22.

Meanwhile, keep an eye out on intranet for events taking place to mark Neath Port Talbot Hospital's 21st birthday, which is on November 29th. There are likely to be a number of events

to celebrate this special anniversary.

SBUHB's Department of Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care is planning to mark a number of events.

Following on from a number of gatherings around Diwali and Inter Faith Week earlier this month, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, when Roman Catholics celebrate Mary's conception without original sin, will be marked on December 8th. Again, keep an eye on our intranet for further details. Meanwhile a carol service will be held on Thursday, 21st December at 12 noon, to be followed by refreshments, at the multi-faith chapel at Morrision. In addition to carol singing, the service includes Bible readings.

## Charity and events

# Emotional anniversary as Burns Club hits milestone



Welsh Dragons Burns Club former members and volunteers, pictured at the anniversary celebration

There were old faces, warm memories – and a fair share of tears.

The Welsh Dragon Burns Club celebrated its twentieth anniversary in September, with a reunion held at the Manor Park County House in Clydach.

The club was set up to offer emotional support to youngsters with burns injuries who have been treated at the Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery at Morrision Hospital. Patients, as well as their family members, enjoy outings, activity camps and even overseas holidays. Receiving no NHS funding, it is all achieved from donations, Welsh Government grants, contributions from Children in Need, and the fundraising efforts of staff and volunteers.

And its real strength is helping build back confidence and self-esteem of those who have burns injuries.

The anniversary reunion saw

several hundred former club members, patients, staff, volunteers, and their families meet up to discuss old times and experiences, and enjoy an afternoon of entertainment.

Some who had benefited from sharing time with the club were among those to address the gathering, including Sam Gardiner, now 32, from Gowerton.

Paediatric burns outreach lead nurse Louise Scannell, the club's co-founder and chairman, said: "It was an extremely emotional afternoon. There were a lot of tears.

"There were lots of children who were emotional seeing each other as well again. It was beautiful seeing older children doing well in their lives and bringing their own families, and partners and children, and seeing how well they have done as adults and what they have done with their own lives.

"I was proud to see what the club

has done for them, and reflect on how much the club did for them at a time of their lives when it was much needed.

"Sam spoke so well there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

"The whole experience reinforced why I have been so involved over the years.

"I brought my own mother and my children as well. My mother has looked after my children when I've been away with the club, and it was important for me for them to see why I go away and what I have been doing."

A number of adults who spent time with the club announced they now intend to volunteer to share their experiences with future burns patients, and the club also received news of a significant donation left as a legacy by the grandparent of a patient. If you are interested in fundraising for Dragon Burns please contact Swansea Bay. healthcharity@wales.nhs.uk .



Have an idea to raise money to support staff and patients in Swansea Bay?

Contact the Swansea Bay University Health Board charity via our website: [www.swanseabayhealthcharity.wales](http://www.swanseabayhealthcharity.wales) (registered charity number 1122805)

# Bay Health

Staff newspaper of Swansea Bay University Health Board

Contact Editorial: [communications.department@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:communications.department@wales.nhs.uk)