

Chief Executive

CONNECTS

COVID-19: One year on



Dear Colleague,

22/03/2021

It is hard to believe that it has only been a year since the UK was locked down for the first time in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To me, it feels like that March 2020 was years ago and, at the same time, only yesterday. It has been a strange and challenging year and one that has changed so many aspects of our lives, not least for those of us in the NHS. Now, on the anniversary of the advent of the pandemic, it is a good time to pause, reflect, remember and begin to collectively process the year we have just experienced.

It is difficult to fit the events of the past year into just one week, but from today until Friday, we will be reflecting on the resilience and amazing efforts of our staff, partners and the community of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. We will also be commemorating and reflecting on the tragic loss of life that we have all been affected by this past year, including that of healthcare staff across NHS Wales and in our own Health Board.

In order to try and capture and reflect upon as many elements of our whole system response as we can, we will be breaking the week down into daily themes. Today, we will be looking at the Health Board's immediate reaction to COVID-19, and the incredible mobilisation of our staff unlike anything we had seen previously. This afternoon, we will be revisiting the immense effort made by our communities to Stay Home, Protect the NHS, and Save Lives as well as the early establishment of our Test, Trace, Protect system.

Tomorrow, we will be examining our partnerships: those that existed already and the ones that we forged as a result of the pandemic. There has been an incredible public health response, for example; one that has involved our own public health staff working in partnership with national and local government, Public Health Wales' specialist protection team, local communities and more in order to try and keep us safe.

This is just one example of incredible partnership working and we'll also be focusing on the input of the community during the pandemic, reflecting on the generosity and community spirit shown to provide countless charitable gifts, meals and refreshments for staff on the front line. Cardiff & Vale Health Charity will be taking a look back at the past year and thanking everyone who has helped with their time, donations, fundraising and support for patients and staff. They'll be highlighting the ways in which funds have been used to make a difference to patient experience and support staff health and wellbeing through a series of short stories on social media. To find out more, follow them on [@health_charity](#) on Twitter and [@healthcharity](#) on Facebook.

We will also be looking at how radical collaboration on this immense scale allowed us to achieve things that would not have otherwise been possible, such as the construction of the Dragon's Heart Hospital in the Principality Stadium.

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We will also be focusing on the health and wellbeing of our own staff and reflecting upon what resources were put in place during the pandemic by the Employee Wellbeing Service and others to support their colleagues. Tomorrow evening we will be paying tribute to the members of staff we have tragically lost to this terrible disease and you can read more about our plans for this special commemoration later in this newsletter.

On Wednesday, we will recap the incredible efforts of our staff who worked to keep our essential services running, including urgent surgeries, primary care, and the emergency unit. There are dozens of stories from across our system about how staff took the initiative to ensure continuity of care, acting boldly and innovating to serve our patients. Many of the new ways of working have revolutionised the way we do things and I'm sure will influence the future of healthcare in not just Cardiff and the Vale, but all of Wales and the UK.

Thursday will see us take an in-depth look at the work of our Research and Development department. I am incredibly proud that Cardiff and Vale UHB has been a leading light in this field throughout the pandemic, pioneering many live-saving treatments for some the most severely unwell patients with COVID-19 and the R&D team earning special recognition for their efforts from the Prime Minister. We will also revisit how digital technology has enable us to not just keep services running but actively improve them, making care more convenient for patients by saving them time and keeping them safe at home.



Cardiff and Vale University Health Board COVID-19: One Year On

On Friday, we will celebrate the awe-inspiring efforts of our mass vaccination team so far who continue to progress the largest immunisation programme that the NHS has ever seen. It is this programme which allows us to begin to look forward to a life, and a health service, beyond COVID-19, which we will be doing on Friday afternoon.

Despite the challenges and the suffering of the last year, it is incumbent upon us to take whatever positive, whatever slim silver lining we can from the pandemic and there are several exciting pieces of work that will define the direction of our Health Board for the next few years, including the Shaping Our Future Clinical Services engagement and the Dragon's Heart Institute, which will be unveiled on Friday.

Our Communications team will be sharing content to the Health Board's social media channels throughout the week, but when it comes to our experiences over the past 12 months, no voice is more important than yours, so please join the conversation. Please share your experiences, memories and thoughts for the past 12 months as well as your hopes for the future, using the hashtag #CAVOneYearOne

Read more at [oneyearon.wales](https://www.oneyearon.wales)

Remembering those we have lost

Tomorrow (23rd March), a minute's silence will take place across the UK to reflect on one year since the first COVID-19 lockdown was announced and remember all those we have tragically lost to the virus.

Please join us at 12:00pm as we take part in the national Day of Reflection, to commemorate and reflect on the tragic loss of life that we have all been affected by this past year, including that of healthcare staff across NHS Wales and in our own Health Board: Jitendra Rathod, Gareth Roberts, Julianne Cadby, Allan Macalalad, Dominga David and Andrew Woolhouse. Their loss is still very sorely felt throughout the Health Board and they sorely missed.

Buildings across our sites will be illuminated and, from 8:00pm, the nation is encouraged to come together by standing outside with a light - a candle, torch or even your phone - for a doorstep vigil to remember those we have lost and show support for those going through bereavement.



Thanking staff for a year of incredible dedication

News from Welsh Government last week of a £500 bonus payment for health and social care staff was extremely welcome and I would like to echo their messages of thanks and recognition of what staff have been through and the dedication they have shown over the past 12 months. Internally, we will be looking at what we can do to convey our own message of thanks and invest further in staff wellbeing facilities in conjunction with the Employee Wellbeing Service and our friends in the Cardiff & Vale Health Charity.

I have tried to find the words to express the level of dedication shown by Cardiff and Vale UHB staff but, in the end, someone else has done it for me in a more eloquent and moving way than I could. A few weeks ago I received a letter which I would like to share with you now.

“Dear Mr Len Richards,

“I only came in to the NHS a few years back to work in admin, but until now during this difficult time I never realised how important every employee is and how proud you are wearing a name page bearing the NHS symbol.

“But this is now felt not only in work but in my home. Our daughter at the start of March 2020 lockdown began her first job in the local supermarket and worked right through like so many with no thought of her own safety. She would carry bags over to customers’ houses during her shift even though this was not part of her job, we would tell her to be careful but her response was, ‘MUM THEY NEEDED HELP THEY HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO HELP.’

“Then she saw an advert saying the NHS needed Healthcare Support Workers. She rang them, left her details and within a day she had a call just before Christmas and told she would be starting asap. She gave her notice in at the super market and began her 3-days training.

“She came home the last day to say she was in C7, a COVID ward. You can guess we were very worried and did to be honest try to change her mind. But she went on her first day and loved it. It was unbelievable how much she was learning in such a short time.

“Second day, she lost her first patient while holding their hands, and she cried most of the night once home. But still again she wanted to return. Third day, she was helping prepare someone who had passed, she told us she talked to them even though she knew they could not hear anymore.

“Then, before she was to go back she woke up coughing unable to catch her breath. The ambulance was called but luckily after two hours she started breathing better. She tested positive for COVID. It was a difficult few weeks, she was very weak tired and breathless.

“We sat her down and asked if maybe she shouldn’t be returning to the ward and to look for something else, but ‘NO!’ she said she loved the job and kept texting her line manager to reassure her she would be back.

“And she did. The first day back after being so ill, she did her 12 hour shift with no complaining even though when she came home she cried with exhaustion. But she was happy she had gone back and told us all about the lovely staff and patients she met that day. She tells us what she can about her day and we cannot be more proud.

“Now she comes home tired and sometime upset about events of the day, but also full of lovely stories about how much comfort patients get from her being there. And Facetiming relatives for them, the jokes they share.

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“So, Mr Richards I am sending you this so you can see not just how much your employees care, but also to let you know about the 20 year old, you may never meet, who went through so much but still wants to work for the NHS.”

I think this letter encapsulates the spirit of the NHS and I would like to offer my most heartfelt thanks to the person who sent it. I hope I do one day meet the person it is written about. Like all of you, she is a credit to her profession, and to our organisation, and given the chance, I would very much like to thank her in person. I hope that she considers staying with us long after the COVID pandemic is over.



Join me and others for a Facebook Live event

Tomorrow evening, our Chair Charles Janczewski I will be joined a panel of staff from across the Health Board to reflect on the past year. Panellists include:

- Jonathon Gray - Director of Innovation and Improvement
- Claire Salisbury - Head of Procurement
- Simone Joslyn - Head of Arts and Health Charity
- Angela Hughes - Assistant Director of Patient Experience
- Nicola Bevan - Head of Employee Wellbeing
- Fiona Kinghorn - Executive Director of Public Health

- Lorna Bennett - Consultant in Public Health
- Sian Griffiths - Consultant in Public Health
- Geoff Walsh - Director of Capital, Estates and Facilities
- Joanne Brandon - Director of Communications

The event will begin at 6pm on the Cardiff and Vale UHB Facebook page.

It promises to be a fascinating discussion and we will be taking questions from the audience about the pandemic, our response to it, and the future of the Health Board.

Celebrating a vaccination milestone!

Last week, our Mass Vaccination Programme passed the very significant milestone of delivering 200,000 COVID-19 vaccines. We're now at around the 220,000 mark; this equates to around 46% of our adult population having received the first dose of the vaccine with tens of thousands of second doses already given as well.

Mass Vaccination Program started from December 8th with the ambition to protect the population of Cardiff and Vale as quickly as possible with vaccination for COVID-19. The programme involves a multi-faceted approach and a mixed model of delivery, that in Cardiff and the Vale includes mobile teams, mass vaccination centres, GP practices and healthcare 'hubs'.

The Mass Vaccination Programme in Cardiff and the Vale has been progressing well, vaccinating cohorts as per the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) guidance. Many milestones have been achieved along the way which include:

- Opening three Mass Vaccination Centres at Splott, Pentwyn and Barry
- Every resident and staff member of care homes across Cardiff and the Vale receiving the first dose of the Covid Vaccine by the 1st of February
- Over 100,000 first doses of the COVID vaccine administered by 12th February
- Achieving the target of offering the 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to everybody in JCVI priority groups 1-4 in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan

Now, we have identified a fourth Mass Vaccination Centre in Cardiff Bay, which will be opening this week and second doses of the vaccines are now being administered to people in priority groups 1-4, and vaccinations for priority groups 5-7 are being run concurrently.

Last Friday, our Executive Director of Public Health, Fiona Kinghorn, received her Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, joining the thousands of people who have already happily received this safe and effective form of immunisation against the deadly COVID-19 virus.



This Friday, we will be hosting another Facebook Live event to answer any questions or concerns you might have around the vaccine and dispel some of the misinformation you might have heard. More details of this event will be made available on our social media channels during the week so please keep your eye out for it.

On every level, this programme has been a monumental effort of all those involved and I would like to reiterate my thanks to them for offering us a safe way out of this pandemic, with the modern medical miracle of vaccination.

Awards and Recognition for our staff

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, every member of staff at Cardiff and Vale UHB has gone above and beyond the call of duty to treat those with COVID, keep essential services running, keep our population safe, and support their colleagues on the front line. As a result we have seen a variety of awards and recognition bestowed upon our workforce, all of which makes me incredibly proud.

As part of the Queen's birthday honours, Claire Salisbury, Head of Procurement, Jade Cole, Critical Care Research Lead, Paula Gallent, Ward Sister, and Alice Bretland (Richards), Home Ventilation Service Lead and Specialist Respiratory Physiotherapist, were all honoured for services to the NHS during COVID-19. Dr Graham Shortland, Consultant Paediatrician, was also honoured for services to Paediatrics, Patient Safety and the NHS in Wales.

Later, in the New Year's honours, Executive Director for Therapies and Health Science, Dr Fiona Jenkins, was also awarded an MBE for services to healthcare. This year, she has led the development of both a multidisciplinary team and online resource, www.keepingmewell.com, to help people with their rehabilitation following COVID-19 and with post-COVID syndrome, or long COVID, which was the first of its kind in Wales.

The collaboration established by colleagues in Dermatology (Dr Mahbub Chowdry) and Occupational Health (Nicola Bevan and Karen Ryan) was featured in the [British Medical Journal](#) in June 2020. In December 2020, an article about what we learnt about systems leadership from building the Dragon's Heart Hospital was also [featured in the BMJ](#).

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board School Nursing Team joined in the celebrations for the Nursing Times Award win for the innovative text messaging service, ChatHealth, an invaluable resource for many young people during the pandemic.

Professor Rachel Collis was awarded The Featherstone Professorship in recognition of her work in the field of obstetric anaesthesia on the OBS Cymru project, which she continued throughout the pandemic. She was the first woman to ever be awarded this professorship.

Professor Howard Kynaston was awarded the 2021 British Association of Urological Surgeons (BAUS) St Peter's Medal. The St Peter's Medal is awarded by BAUS to those who have made a notable contribution to the advancement of urology and is the highest accolade bestowed upon urologists by the association.

Just last week, our Transformation of Glaucoma Eye Care Services team were highly commended at the Health Service Journal Awards for their work to establish a digitised patient record which enables shared care between optometry and ophthalmology. This work means that only patients requiring sight-saving interventions are required to attend hospital, saving over 3,000 patients from making trips to hospital in 2020. The judges said, "this was a strong innovation case and showed demonstrable impact both to patients and staff working in the area of eye care. The innovation demonstrated a way of ensuring sustainability via integration with contracting mechanisms and was well received in terms of adoption."

We have also recently learned that a number of our staff have received awards from the High Sherriff of South Glamorgan for their work during the pandemic. I would like to wish a huge congratulations to Darrell Baker, Emma Cooke, Chris Fegan, Ben Hope-Gill, Kay Jeynes, Chris Lewis, Tracy Meredith, Sara Sturdy, and Huw Williams.

I am sure there are many awards and pieces of recognition that I have missed in this overview and I am sorry that I could not include everything. I am also sure that as we take the time to pause and reflect on the work we have done and what we have achieved in the last 12 months, there will soon be much more to mention.

How did it feel on the front line?

On March 12th last year, Dr Matt Morgan wrote a letter to the British Medical Journal, which you may have read of seen the coverage surrounding. A year later, he has published another letter describing what it has been like working on the critical care unit during COVID-19. I would like to thank Matt for his insight as it has been particularly eye-opening for me.

Insights into the experiences of our staff on the front line are of the absolute utmost importance and we must not forget the challenging conditions they have faced this year.

Instead we are committed to learning from them and will be looking to channel what we have learnt into our support services for staff, our plans for any future pandemics, and the construction of a new hospital in the next decade.

I would also like to echo Matt's sentiment as he writes, "This crisis has been fought not only by the nurses, the cleaners, the doctors, the care workers, the delivery drivers, but by the people—by you, by you all. Thank you. Thank you all."

Marking the year with art

Today, (22nd March), Cardiff and Vale Arts for Health and Wellbeing will be launching the 'Holding on to Hope' Exhibition featuring art from the students of Beth Morris Workshops which is available for purchase online. The exhibition and affordable art sale celebrates a community who bonded in a time where connection through creativity became a lifeline. All money raised will go towards funding the Health Board's Arts programme. There is some beautiful and inspiring art available – [please take a look here](#).

The Arts for Health and Wellbeing team will be reflecting on the past year and highlighting the collaborations and partnerships forged to bring art to staff and patients in hospital. They'll also be unveiling new art work commissions by Nathan Wyburn, Dan Petersen and also releasing "A year of being nervous" penned by spoken word artist and poet Will Ford.

Nathan Wyburn's collages capture the new Lakeside Wing building and are made using a combination of photographs and memories sent to Nathan of the original building and during its development. The artwork even includes images of the blueprints for the rebuild.

During the construction of the Lakeside Wing's staff haven, our Health Charity's Arts team worked alongside the National Museum of Wales to decorate it with reproductions of artwork from the museum. Now, the museum have generously donated two pieces of poetry to us to mark COVID: One Year On, which I would like to share with you, overleaf.



Legacy

Breath in,

Breath out.

Let the waves worry about time as you rest
with feet on warm sand, paused and peaceful.
Along the hospital hallways you mark yourself into memory.
Each gifted smile stamps the traces of you a little deeper.
A legacy fossilised from long shifts and late night battles,
all so someone else can live a little lighter.

In years to come, another will unearth the carvings of you,
preserved amongst shells and wave-smoothed sea glass.
They'll crack open rock, in awe at the curving patterns,
and say: 'They used to be here, holding up the broken.'

Cychod Papur

Rho gornel o dy ofid i mi heno,
un ddalen fach,
a gad i mi ei blygu, llithro bysedd
hyd corneli ac esmwytháu y
crychau'i gyd. Ei weithio'n
degan papur, yn ddysgl frau.

Tyrd efo fi i'w gosod yn y dŵr.
Mae'r llanw'n tynnu'r traeth
trwy'i fysedd clymog, yn cribo'r gro
a'n cwrwg bach yn dawnsio.
Gwylia hi yn codi ei thrwyn uwch ben
y don, cyn plygu eto tua'r pant.
Codi, plygu, codi. A'r tonnau'n tynnu
byzedd trwy y traeth.