

# Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN) News

ISSUE 11: Winter 2025 / Spring 2026

Welcome to issue eleven of our quarterly newsletter.



As we step out of the winter months and welcome the brighter days of spring, we're pleased to bring you the latest news from Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCNs) across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area.

This newsletter is designed to keep you connected with the incredible work taking place in our communities, celebrating the innovative ideas, strong partnerships and inspiring achievements that continue to make a real difference to people's lives. Inside, you'll find details of upcoming events, uplifting stories and exciting new developments. Our aim is to help you feel informed, involved and proud of the progress we're making together as we move into a new season of growth and renewal. We hope you enjoy this edition and that it offers a positive and inspiring glimpse into the fantastic work happening across our communities.

For further information about the NCN programme, please visit [Neighbourhood Care Networks \(NCNs\) - Aneurin Bevan University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#), or please email: [abb.strategicchangeteam@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:abb.strategicchangeteam@wales.nhs.uk)



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## What is a Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN)?

Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCNs) bring together local health and care services within a specific area, typically supporting communities of around 40,000 to 60,000 people.

Each NCN unites a wide range of professionals, including GPs, dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, community nurses, allied health professionals (AHPs) and social care specialists.

By working collaboratively, NCNs improve care coordination, build a clearer picture of local health needs, prioritise service improvements and create tailored solutions that enhance the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.



## Blaenau Gwent

### Everyone Deserves a Hug on Valentine's Day – A Wellbeing Event to Remember

Our adults-only Animals Interactive Wellbeing Event on 12 February was a heart warming success, bringing joy, confidence and a real boost to mental wellbeing. Held at the Georgetown Community Hub as part of the Keeping Well Café, the session embraced the idea that everyone deserves a Valentine's hug, even from a friendly animal!



Visitors met an incredible mix of creatures, including a python, meerkats, guinea pigs, rabbits, a tortoise, a tarantula, a skunk named Mable, and even Magic the black barn owl and Raven the silver fox.

Nearly 50 people attended, with many facing fears, others enjoying calming interactions, and everyone leaving with big smiles and a lighter mood. The event clearly showed the stress-relieving and uplifting impact of spending time with animals.

A huge thank you to Aneurin Leisure Trust and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for funding and supporting this fantastic wellbeing activity.

### Bloom & Breathe

A new staff wellbeing drop-in will launch this spring at YAB Hospital, offering gentle gardening, listening support and a quiet space to pause during lunchtime in the staff courtyard.

Bloom & Breathe, supported by Chaplaincy and the Blaenau Gwent NCN Team, provides a calm, no-pressure environment where staff can step away from the busy hospital environment and reconnect with nature through simple gardening activities. No experience is needed, and there's no expectation to talk, just a chance to breathe, slow down and look after your wellbeing.

Thanks to a donation from the YAB League of Friends, a shed and gardening tools have been purchased. Lisa, our Activities Coordinator, also secured plant donations from Abergavenny Garden Centre, including daffodils, Helleborus Niger and two young Christmas trees.

### A Community Brought Together Through Wellbeing, Warmth and Wonderful Partnerships

The Wellbeing Concert at Georgetown Community Hub, Tredegar on 29 January brought the community together for an uplifting afternoon of music and connection. Organised by Happy Healthy Blaenau Gwent and funded by Aneurin Leisure Trust and a Warm Space Grant, the event created a welcoming space for nearly 100 attendees.

Kelly Ann Wyatt's performance set a joyful atmosphere, helped by support from Thriving Communities CIC and a range of partner organisations including Age Cymru, Men's Den, BG Wellbeing Friends, Activate BG, BG Food Partnership and the You're Never Alone group.

Refreshments were partly supplied by the Food Bank at 1 The Circle.

The day highlighted strong community spirit, with residents helping each other attend and volunteers, including Miss Teen Wales finalist Rianna James, adding to the positivity.

For those wanting to stay connected, the Keeping Well Café continues every Thursday at 3.30pm.



## Caerphilly

### Caerphilly Optometry Collaborative Delivers Hands-On CPD Workshop at Specsavers Caerphilly

The Caerphilly Optometry Collaborative hosted a well-attended continuing professional development (CPD) evening this week, bringing together 21 local clinicians for a practical workshop on digital slit lamp adapters. The event took place at Specsavers Caerphilly and formed part of the Collaborative's ongoing commitment to enhancing clinical skills across primary eye care. The session was jointly led by Nkosi Yearwood, Caerphilly Optometry Collaborative Lead for the North and South, and Ebube Obi, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and Honorary Lecturer at Cardiff University. Together, they guided attendees through the use of digital slit lamp adapters, offering demonstrations, hands-on practice, and discussions on how digital imaging can be integrated into routine assessment and remote consultation pathways.



### Caerphilly Locality Team Donates Food and Toiletries to The Parish Trust

Staff from the Caerphilly Locality Team have come together to support local residents by donating food, toiletries, and essential household items to The Parish Trust, a community charity based in Caerphilly that provides practical help to people facing hardship. The initiative was made possible thanks to generous contributions from colleagues across the locality team, with additional support from the Machen Women's Institute, whose members collected and donated a significant portion of the food items.

The donation will help stock The Parish Trust's Community Pantry, which provides vital assistance to individuals and families experiencing financial pressures, food insecurity, or unexpected challenges.



### Trethomas Health Centre - Period Dignity

Caerphilly County Borough Council, through the Welsh Government's Period Dignity Grant, has secured funding to ensure that anyone who menstruates in Caerphilly County can access free period products. If you live, work, or attend school in Caerphilly, you can collect reusable and disposable products, including tampons, pads, menstrual cups, and period pants, from over 90 locations across the county.

The Caerphilly Locality Team is working in partnership with the Local Authority, and Trethomas Health Centre is proud to be one of the locations offering free period products to service users. Schools, charities, and non-profit organisations in Caerphilly County can also request free products for their service users by contacting [perioddignity@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:perioddignity@caerphilly.gov.uk) or calling 07394 400991.

For more information about the Welsh Government's Period Proud campaign, visit:

<https://gov.wales/period-proud-wales>.





## Monmouthshire

### Monmouthshire Teams Show Incredible Resilience During Storm Claudia

At the end of 2025, during the severe flooding caused by Storm Claudia, the Monmouthshire community showed extraordinary resilience and teamwork. Water levels on the River Monnow reached record highs, yet staff and partners worked tirelessly to protect residents.

District Nurses travelled by boat to reach patients, vulnerable individuals were safely evacuated to Monnow Vale, and local organisations, including the leisure centre, churches and businesses, supported evacuees with shelter, donations and hot meals. Castle Gate GP Practice, despite being badly affected, was back up and running within days thanks to rapid relocation to Monnow Vale. Pharmacy pods were also set up to ensure residents could still access essential medication.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all staff, emergency responders and partners for their professionalism, compassion and unwavering commitment throughout this challenging period.



### Creating Calm: Cas Gwent Ward Celebrates Its New Patient Wellbeing Space

We are pleased to share an update on the improved Day Room on Cas-Gwent Ward at Chepstow Community Hospital.

The space has been refreshed to better support patients' physical and emotional wellbeing, helping reduce deconditioning and encourage daily engagement.

It now includes:

- Fidget boards for fine motor skills and calming stimulation
- Table skittles and light games to promote movement and social interaction
- Therapeutic and leisure activities offering a motivating change of environment

This welcoming, activity-rich space is helping patients stay active, engaged and supported during their stay.

Thank you to all staff who continue to champion this valuable area for our patients.

### From One Room to 1,000 Patients: A Monmouthshire Milestone!

Back in 2022, the Rapid Medical Service in Monmouthshire began with just one room, one frailty clinician, and very few referrals. Thanks to strong support from District Nurses and persistent engagement with GP surgeries, the service slowly took shape and the progress since then has been remarkable.

Today, the team has:

Seen and discharged 1,000 patients

Treated 80% safely at home

Achieved <1% mortality and received excellent feedback

With joined-up working across the CRT team, District Nurses, GPs and managers, the service has expanded clinics, broadened treatments, grown the DAP facility and launched North services delivering the equivalent of 31 Cas-Gwent wards in the community. Beyond the significant cost savings, the real value is the improved patient experience.

Staff and patient compliments reflect the impact:

"Thank you for the friendly and fantastic care - you went above and beyond."

"This is integrated working at its best... a joy to be part of."

A huge thank you to Dr Kitson and the Frailty Team - this milestone deserves real celebration.



## Newport

### ABUHB Pulmonary Rehab and National Exercise Referral Scheme - My Patient Story

Before starting the ABUHB Pulmonary Rehabilitation and NERS programmes, I felt stuck and overwhelmed by my weight, COPD and MS. Exercise felt impossible, and my confidence and mental health had really suffered. At my heaviest, I weighed 34 stone 8lb (2024).

Everything changed when Pulmonary Rehab contacted me. The team set small, achievable weekly goals that helped me build motivation and hope. After completing the 8-week programme, I joined the National Exercise Referral Scheme in Newport.

I attended two sessions a week on the 32-week pulmonary pathway and one weekly weight-management class with NERS Instructor Kayleigh. This structure helped me improve my mobility, breathlessness, eating habits and overall wellbeing. It also gave me a routine and a supportive social outlet.

There were weeks when my weight didn't change or my diet slipped, but the programme helped me stay on track.

Over two years, I have lost 15 stone and now attend the gym independently. I hope my journey encourages others facing similar challenges. Current weight: 19 stone (2026).



### New Year, New You Event at 19 Hills Health & Wellbeing Centre

On 15–16 January 2026, 19 Hills Health and Wellbeing Centre held its New Year, New You event, bringing together a range of local health and wellbeing services. Partners included Help Me Quit, Alcohol Support, Dietetics, Mental Health, Momentwm, Oral Health, VAWDASV and the IWN team, with fitness taster sessions and refreshments available. The Friday coffee morning continued the theme with additional guest organisations. The event was well attended and helped raise awareness of the support available through the Centre and local community groups.

### Warm Hub @ 19 Hills Health & Wellbeing Centre

On Friday 23 January 2026, 19 Hills Health and Wellbeing Centre hosted a Warm Hub in partnership with Culture Minds UK, an organisation providing culturally sensitive mental health support for African men and minority communities in Wales.

The event offered a welcoming space with hot drinks, refreshments and a Pay-it-Forward table with warm supplies. Culture Minds UK led a focus group exploring how to help Newport residents feel more confident accessing local services, and the importance of normalising conversations about personal challenges. Participants also discussed young people's mental health, calling for youth-led activities, creative spaces and regular drop-ins to tackle isolation. Several partner services supported the event, including H.E.A.L. (Henrie's Empowerment for Awareness and Life - sexual health awareness), Dietetics, Oral Health, Mental Health services and Help Me Quit.

A key theme was the importance of building trust through relatable voices, culturally sensitive approaches and safe community spaces. Consistent engagement and visible partnerships were highlighted as essential for reducing stigma and improving access to support.



## Torfaen

### Torfaen Integrated Wellbeing Network Collaborative Launched

Partners and community groups from across Torfaen came together recently for the re-launch of the Torfaen IWN collaborative. This marked an important step in the development of the Torfaen IWN with the aim of bringing together those involved in the wellbeing offer in Torfaen to share best practice, build relationships and identify shared opportunities for co-working.

With almost 30 key partners in attendance, various services provided updates on ongoing projects including but not limited to:

- Torfaen Council
- Department of Work & Pensions
- Torfaen Voluntary Alliance
- Hope GB
- 4 minds
- Age Connects
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Gwent Carers Hub
- Tasty Not Wasty
- Health Determinants Research Collaborative

In addition, a host of community hubs and community groups were also represented.

Feedback from attendees has been fantastic and discussions are already underway around future working opportunities and project ideas that can be developed through the collaborative in the new year.

If you would like to get involved in anyway, please contact [Jordan.royal@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Jordan.royal@wales.nhs.uk)

### What is an Integrated Wellbeing Network (IWN)?

Integrated Wellbeing Networks improve and strengthen wellbeing by connecting and enhancing community assets for people to build relationships and find the things that matter to them. There are four elements:

1. Place-based collaboration
2. Community-based Hubs
3. People who deliver services and support
4. Easy access to well-being Information Integrated Wellbeing Networks work collectively to help sustain and improve wellbeing in our communities.



## Other News...

### Specialist Eye Care Now Available Closer to Home

Eye care in Wales is changing, with Welsh General Ophthalmic Services (WGOS) allowing specially trained optometrists to assess and treat many conditions locally, meaning quicker access to care and fewer hospital visits.

Neirin's Story:

"Earlier this year, I noticed a large 'floater' in my right eye that hadn't been there before. It worried me, so I asked an optometrist if I should get it checked. They told me it was important to rule out serious issues like retinal detachment. What surprised me most? I didn't need to go to hospital or wait weeks for an appointment. Instead, I was seen quickly by a specially trained optometrist at my local optician in Risca, just a short walk from home.

The practice was calm and welcoming and the assessment was thorough. As this was an urgent appointment, there was no charge.

Thankfully, everything was fine. The only advice was that the eye drops they used during the appointment meant I couldn't drive for a few hours, but that was no problem since I walked home!"

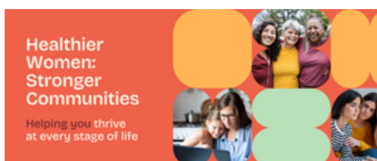
### Healthier Women: Stronger Communities

The Gwent Women's Health Hub has now launched. A new online space designed to give women quick, reliable access to information, advice and support for their health needs.

The hub aims to help women across Gwent feel informed, confident and empowered, offering guidance on healthy living, local community groups and events, and how to access further support from healthcare professionals.

It's a simple, supportive starting point for anyone seeking trusted women's health information at any stage of life.

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-of-services/womens-health-hub/>



### NEW Optometry FAQs Now Available

New FAQs are now available on the Pulse intranet to help staff understand recent changes to eye care services across Wales. Following the introduction of the new Wales General Ophthalmic Services (WGOS) contract in October 2023, several previous services, including GOS(W), Eye Health Examination Wales, and Low Vision Services Wales, have been replaced. The new FAQs explain what WGOS is, why services have changed, and how patients can now access support through high-street optometrists. The FAQs also cover common queries from staff, including where to signpost patients with urgent eyecare needs, how to find practices offering specific services, and what to do if a patient is housebound.

You can read the full set of staff facing FAQs on the [Optometry /Eyecare Information page](#)

Information for the public, including FAQs, is available on our website:

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospital-s/gps-dentists-opticians-ncns/optician/>



All editions of our quarterly newsletter are available on the [ABUHB website](#). If you would like more information about any of the featured stories or wish to be added to our mailing list to receive this newsletter, please email [lisa.orford@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:lisa.orford@wales.nhs.uk).

