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Health Board

PRIMARY CARE

Clusters: Past, Present and Future

NORTH POWYS

August 2019

WHO WE ARE?

North Powys Primary Care Cluster is made up of 7 GP Practices - Llanidloes, Newtown, Dyfi Valley, Montgomery, Welshpool, Llanfair Caereinion and Llanfyllin, with a combined list size of approximately 64,000 patients.

BACKGROUND

The cluster group formed in 2012. Initial collaborative working was good and the Cluster worked well with the Health Board to develop solutions and pathways for challenges facing the health economy.

Although the cluster has a low level of maturity with collaborative working still in its infancy, partner participation is very consistent.

The local difficulties with practice sustainability has impacted heavily on the ability of practices to devote sufficient impetus to take collaborative projects forward but have had to concentrate on maintaining their own viability.

The cluster meet bi-monthly and include participation from the patient forum group, Powys Teaching Health Board mental health services and 3rd Sector representatives. They are looking to extend the core group in the future.



The North Powys Cluster area has many challenges with rural communities, high deprivation and an ageing population.

There are transport challenges with long distances to the nearest District General Hospitals of Bronglais and Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital.

Recruitment continues to be a challenge across the cluster with Locum availability remaining very limited.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The North Powys Cluster has a diverse group of practices with substantially different ways of working. They recognise this so they are working hard to find solutions to common problems. The cluster have worked closely with Powys Teaching Health Board to identify, and to help provide these solutions.

CONTACT DETAILS:-

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CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

- Introduction of Physician Associates to support GPs
- Introduction of local Dermatology Outpatient Services
- Looking at alternative disciplines i.e. Urgent Care Practitioners (UCPs)
- Introduction of local British Pregnancy Advisory Services
- Introduction of telephone triage in some practices
- Introduction of Health Board Silver Cloud online CBT system to support GP Practices and Community Mental Health services.
- Introduction of 3rd sector community connectors, attached to each practice to support statutory service providers.
- Strong body looking at bringing patient services back into the locality i.e. repatriation of mental health service.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The development of the Physician Associate (PA) Programme has embedded in the cluster over the past 3 years, with 4 practices experiencing their invaluable support. PAs support GPs in the diagnosis and management of patients. They are trained to perform a number of roles including; taking medical histories, performing examinations, analysing test results, and diagnosing illnesses under the supervision of a doctor.

It was announced in July 2019 that the physician associate profession will in the future be formally regulated by the GMC. This is a big step forward for the profession and recognition of the valuable role PAs play in providing front-line health care to patients.

The cluster are also strongly involved with the virtual ward, and were involved with the redesign of data capturing to ensure the information provided was more meaningful.

WHAT NEXT?

- Involvement in the planning of the Health & Wellbeing Hub in Newtown; a project, which will hopefully allow for the provision of services for patients closer to home. This will also help patients seek advice and help from the 3rd sector and Powys County Council to attempt to decrease unnecessary GP appointments.
- Introduction of cluster physiotherapists to support GP practices and community services.
- Exploring opportunities for cluster based social workers.
- Expansion of the Pharmacy Team to support sustainability.
- Expansion of the Triage system
- Support MDT development, linking in with Glyndwr University.
- Delivery of transformational models for primary and community care, with clinical change programmes to tackle the 'Big Four' causes of ill health and disability in Powys.
- Improving; Performance monitoring and reporting, Capacity for service planning & evaluation to support Cluster development, Access, Long term conditions management, Information Technology usage, Practice Sustainability, Language and accessibility standards, a skilled workforce, Strong leadership and improving Eye care, Dental Services & Medicines Management.

