



# Your Powys Voice

Issue 4  
December 2020

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## Just for fun

1. Who designed the gardens at Powis Castle in the 1680's?
  2. When did the slate industry start in Wales?
  3. What is the name of the highest waterfall in Wales?
- Answers on page 9*

## Message from the Chief Officer

Welcome to the Christmas edition of Powys Voice, the newsletter for Powys Community Health Council. We represent the views of Powys residents and act as the NHS 'watchdog' in Wales.

Since our last newsletter, the country and services have been challenged by COVID-19. For many of us, this has meant working differently, communicating differently and supporting friends, families, colleagues and communities through these difficult times.

As a CHC we have continued to gather fortnightly information from our members about issues and concerns that individuals and communities were facing at this time and have used this to draw matters to the attention of our Health Board.

We also undertook a survey on accessing video conferencing services. In addition, we have



continued to meet with the Health Board twice weekly in order to keep up-to-date on urgent and temporary service changes (and their re-instatement where possible) and we have worked to ensure that information about the recent early opening of the Grange University Hospital Cwmbran has been provided to patients in south Powys who have been affected by the consequential changes at Nevill Hall Hospital Abergavenny. During September we conducted an important survey amongst patients which has resulted in a soon to be published report "GP Access during Covid 19 Pandemic".

Our advocacy team, which provides a free service that helps people with their concerns regarding NHS care, has helped more people than in any of our previous years. We want to build upon our successes by raising our profile even more and continuing to make sure that Your Powys Voice is heard. On behalf of us all, I wish you a happy festive season and a peaceful New Year.

*Lizzie Blackburn*



## Hearing Your Views

Since our September newsletter our new way of working seems to have become less the "new" and more the "norm". Due to the pandemic, you won't have seen us out and about undertaking NHS visits or simply hanging around a garden centre listening to your views. We are very much missing this interaction, but we would like to assure you that Powys patient experience is still very much at the forefront of our roles and responsibilities. We are still here keeping our ears close to the ground and we still welcome you sharing your views and experiences

with us. Our members and staff continue to have weekly meetings with Powys Teaching Health Board, which gives the CHC any chance to raise questions or concerns we may have and allows PTHB to update and discuss with us any potential change to services.



The engagement team are always looking into new ways of keeping in touch with Powys residents. Since March, the social media activity has increased rapidly, and we have changed our approach in how we share valuable information in a bid to reach a wider audience throughout Powys. We do ask that if our social media efforts have not reached you, then please kindly inform us on how best to keep you updated. We have also recently undertaken "Text Local" training, which now opens up another way for members of the public to contact us. In the New Year we will begin to utilise this service whereby a member of public will be able to text us instead of calling or emailing us.

We are very pleased to have launched our new website. We have simplified the layout to make viewing CHC information more user friendly. People accessing our new website can now access visit reports as well as meeting reports. Please access our new website at the following link – [powyschc.nhs.wales/](https://powyschc.nhs.wales/) or [powyscic.gig.cymru/](https://powyscic.gig.cymru/)

It has come to the time of year again when we need to develop our plan of work for 2021-22. We would like to seek your opinions and ideas on what you think we should be doing in order to best represent the residents of Powys with regards to health services.

To aid this process, we would be grateful if you could provide the CHC with your views by clicking here to access our stakeholder survey

<https://tas.survey-me.com/take-a-survey/qya1g>



Please also feel free to share this survey with anyone you know within Powys who may wish to share their views.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in our survey about GP access during the COVID-19 pandemic. 819 people in Powys took the time to complete the survey.

We received some very positive comments about patients' experiences of accessing GP services. However, we also heard from people who felt that GPs were not providing the services they expect to receive and from people who had difficulty accessing services via the telephone.

The model of general practice changed very quickly in March. This was in line with Welsh Government policy and guidance and the main reason was to limit face-to-face contact to help stop the spread of Coronavirus.

We asked people what they think about the use of telephone and video consultations in the future. Over half of respondents said they would prefer to be seen face-to-face and about a quarter of respondents said they would be happy to use telephone or video consultations in the future.

We have produced a report which has been shared with Powys Teaching Health Board, Welsh Government, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and the Local Medical Committee. We plan to publish the report in the middle of December. Please look out for it on our website and social media pages.

Nationally, the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales, has published two reports in recent months:

**[Maternity Services in Wales: What CHCs have heard during the coronavirus pandemic](#)**



This report highlights how the coronavirus pandemic has affected people's experiences of maternity care. It reveals how much people appreciate the caring NHS staff who made such a difference to them as they went through their life changing experience in difficult circumstances, sometimes without their loved ones with them. However, the report also shows that some patients are feeling let down. The NHS needs to do everything it can so that women and their families feel cared for, supported and properly informed at a time when it may not be possible to have the kind of maternity care everyone would want them to have. Good communication and access to clear and up to date information is key to this.

**Feeling Forgotten? Hearing from people waiting for NHS care and treatment during the coronavirus pandemic**

The recently published Welsh Government figures showing people waiting for treatment in



Wales reveals the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on waiting times. The stories people shared with CHCs show the devastating impact this is having on peoples' lives. The NHS in Wales needs to keep in regular touch with people waiting for treatment so that they feel properly informed and involved. People must get the advice and support they need to help them manage the impact of waiting longer for treatment on their everyday lives.

Article by: Andrea Blayney, Deputy Chief Officer





## Advocacy Service

The Community Health Council (CHC) Complaints Advocacy Service can help you to use the NHS concerns process "Putting things right". Our Complaints Advocacy Service is **free, independent** and **confidential**. Our complaints advocacy service works within the NHS complaints regulations. Due to COVID-19 the Advocacy Team has been working from home to continue to provide support to Powys residents through the NHS Complaints Procedure.

We sadly said goodbye to Mrs Nadine Johnson in September. Nadine has been an Advocacy Support Officer with Powys CHC for 14 years. She was a highly valued member of the Advocacy Team and we wish her all the very best for the future.

Diane Phillips  
Advocacy Support Officer



Nadine Johnson,  
Advocacy Support Officer

If you would like to discuss any concerns you have about NHS treatment you have received within the past 12 months you can

contact us on:

**01874 610646**

## Member Spotlight - Cllr David Jones



I have been both a district councillor and a county councillor representing the Guilsfield ward. During this time I became interested in social services and education policies. Due to this I became council representative on the CHC because of the close links between health and social care.

As a councillor and a member of the CHC I can see that in adult social care the council has a responsibility to make sure its citizens are properly looked after and cared for. We also have a duty of care to our children. When anyone falls ill the medical profession is there to care for them. I believe that both services have a responsibility to work together and provide a seamless service for all of our people.

As a member of the CHC it is a responsibility to read and analyse all reports that come to us and to understand them from the point of view of the patient or service user and to ask constantly if this is the best way to provide this service. This same question is considered when we visit hospitals, GP surgeries or inspect ambulance stations.

I am currently the vice-chairman of the Montgomeryshire area of the CHC and find until the virus is beaten there are some things that we cannot do, such as visits. I hope that normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Article by: Cllr David Jones, Vice Chairman Montgomeryshire



## Members Update

It is with some sadness that we say goodbye to members, Rex Shayler and Flavia Humphreys. Rex was a member from May 2016 and was a strong advocate for the work of the CHC and will be missed by us all. Flavia had been with us since August 2018 and stood up for services in North Powys.

We wish them both well for the future and would love to welcome them both back as members of the CHC at any time.

For more information or details on how to become a volunteer member with Powys CHC please contact our Business Manager, Mr Kirsten Jones. Telephone **01874 624206** or Email: **Kirsten.jones@waleschc.org.uk**



Members that have completed four years with us have recently received their Certificate of Appreciation — They are Dr Anthea Wilson, Dr David Collington, Cllr David Jones, Frances Hunt, Geoff Davies, Jacqui Wilding, Nicola Ruck and Rex Shayler.

We would like to say thank you to **all** of our members for their continued support and contribution.

Jacqui Wilding — Member of Powys CHC with her Certificate of Appreciation



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Website: [www.communityhealthcouncils.org.uk/powys](http://www.communityhealthcouncils.org.uk/powys)

Please follow us on Facebook **@PowysCHC** and Twitter **@powys\_chc**

You can help us by encouraging your friends and followers on social media to “like” and “follow” our pages and to complete our surveys. You may also wish to share information about us with members of a group you may be involved with.



## Some old Welsh Christmas Traditions

**Holly and Mistletoe** — Originating with the Druids, around the 3rd Century, this is an ancient tradition in Wales. Holly and Mistletoe would be used to decorate the home. Both of these plants are considered to be good luck, and while the reason has been forgotten in modern times, we continue to use them both in our festive decorations.

**Plygain** — One of the oldest Welsh Christmas traditions, Plygain was an early Christmas morning service (often starting at 4 or 5am) where people gathered in packed rural churches to sing and celebrate. They would sing mainly unaccompanied, three or four part harmony carols in a service that went on until daylight. This would be followed by Christmas feasting, strong ale, oatcakes and playing football!



### Answers to quiz page 1

1. William Winde 2. 1782 3. Pistyll Rhaeadr