



CARE AS CURRENCY

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24



gwerth profiad gofa
care as currency



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

»» BACKGROUND

Established in August 2018, the Gwent Career College Consortium (the Consortium) is a partnership approach to supporting the recruitment, development and qualification of health and social care workers in Gwent. The Consortium has developed a new structure of collaboration between Coleg Gwent, University of South Wales, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, local authorities and care providers who have pledged to work in partnership to develop a skilled and compassionate health and social care workforce across Gwent. Since its inception the Consortium has aimed to develop and strengthen relevant work placements, experiential learning and develop seamless routes into health and social care careers for our local student cohort in Gwent.

The Consortium has developed a suite of projects through its 'Care as Currency' programme which in 2023 was adopted as the public facing, umbrella brand of the Consortium's various projects and continuing partnership.

All projects under the 'Care as Currency' brand share three principal aims:

»» 1

To help introduce a new source of staffing already engaged within the sector, supplying a sustainable pipeline of talent to local authorities, hospitals, and local care providers.

»» 2

To support the principles of the Foundational Economy through the development of skills and talents within local communities while meeting the vision of the Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) joint workforce strategy.

»» 3

To ensure that care has currency and value in the region to a broad range of people who may be seeking to enter or progress within the Health and Social Care workforce.

The scope of the Consortium is, and remains, ambitious and brings together large, multi-faceted organisations on a regional footprint. From the outset, members of the Consortium have shared a passion to work in partnership to benefit the development of local health and social care learners and the wider health and support outcomes of Gwent citizens.

This report provides an overview of the 'Care as Currency' programme to date, its successes, learning and future aspirations. The Consortium remains committed to its innovative, partnership approach to engaging with and developing local talent to meet the future health and social care workforce needs of Gwent.

» ACCESS TO MEDICINE



KEY OBJECTIVE

“To widen access to career pathways into medicine and related subjects.”

Lead partners: Aneurin Bevan UHB, Cardiff University and Coleg Gwent (with support from Agored Cymru)

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

Historically there has been a continued shortage of Gwent based students pursuing careers in medicine. In an innovative move toward inclusivity and equal opportunity, Coleg Gwent joined forces with Agored Cymru and Professor Paul Edwards (ABUHB) to offer students from less advantaged backgrounds an opportunity to study an Access to Medicine course.

The course, which prepares students for a Medical Pathway Degree is the first of its kind in Wales, removing barriers for talented, local individuals who have traditionally faced obstacles to entering the field of medicine.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The development of this programme has been led by Professor Paul Edwards (ABUHB) and Guy Lacey (Principal of Coleg Gwent).

Working in collaboration with Cardiff Medical School and Agored Cymru, Coleg Gwent (Crosskeys Campus) the Agored Access to Higher Education Diploma (Medicine) programme was fully validated in 2023, making Coleg Gwent the first further education college in Wales to gain permission run this course after initial pilot activity in England.

In September 2023, the first cohort of learners were recruited, and four individuals have now successfully completed the initial pilot course. Although the initial cohort of learners was small, this course is now established and will continue to grow, offering opportunities to those in Gwent who aspire to a career in medicine.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To explore opportunities with relevant university schools to expand course provision to those seeking places on allied degree courses such as dentistry.

» LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL CARE WORK PLACEMENTS



CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“**Develop more opportunities for Local Authority Work Placements for learners.**”

Lead partners: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouth, Newport and Torfaen Social Care Local Authorities and Coleg Gwent

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

Launched in September 2022 to address the experiential learning needs of health and social care learners, as well as local authority recruitment requirements, a collaborative placement initiative was established with all five local authorities across Gwent. The goal is to increase opportunities for hands-on experience in the local social care sector, to bridge the gap between education and employment, support learner progression and expand student knowledge of local career pathways.

“**Fantastic people and opportunities. I learnt so much and gained so much insight into what the role entails.**”

Health and Social Care level 3 Learner

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

Since the introduction of the local authority placement framework, significant progress has been made facilitating learner placements within local authority service teams. Within the academic year 2023/24, 30 health and social care learners from Coleg Gwent accessed placements within various local authority settings.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

Widen work placement opportunities across a diverse range of local authority settings and teams, providing learners with essential knowledge about local social care opportunities and enabling them to make more informed decisions about their future careers.

There is also a growing emphasis on providing suitable progression opportunities for learners who wish to enter employment upon completing their studies at Coleg Gwent. Ensuring that learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to pursue, local meaningful career pathways is vital for the long-term success of the work placement framework.

» ABUHB CLINICAL WORK PLACEMENTS

CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“Develop more opportunities for clinical work placements for learners.”

Lead partners: Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Coleg Gwent



BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 highlighted the recruitment challenges confronting health boards throughout Wales, especially the demand for nurses and healthcare support workers. This emphasised the importance of providing meaningful work placements within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board for health and social care students across the college, allowing them first-hand experience of working within clinical settings.

The inaugural programme was developed in partnership with ABUHB in February 2022, providing second-year learners pursuing Level 3 Extended Diplomas with 100 hours of clinical placements across the hospitals.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The initial pilot included 22 students. Of these, 16 students advanced to universities to pursue health-related careers, four secured employment within the health board, and five within the local social care sector.

In the 2022/23 academic year, 23 learners completed clinical placements. Of these, 12 progressed to university, four to higher education courses within the college, and six secured employment within the health board.

This academic year 38 learners across all four college campuses have secured clinical placements. Currently, two learners have secured substantive positions as healthcare support workers within ABUHB.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To expand the programme to accommodate more students each year, ensuring that more learners from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to gain valuable clinical experience. By expanding reach, enhancing the curriculum, and providing robust support systems, the Consortium aims to empower more students to achieve their full potential in the local healthcare sector.

» SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS FOR ILS LEARNERS



CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To offer supported internships for Independent Living Skills Learners within the local health and social care sector.”

Lead partners: Aneurin Bevan UHB, Engage to Change, and Coleg Gwent

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

In February 2022, the supported internship programme was launched in collaboration with ABUHB, Engage to Change, and Learning Disability Wales. This innovative approach combines work-based learning with a personalised study programme, incorporating elements from the independent living skills (ILS) Pathway 4 curriculum. The programme aims to support ILS learners with the skills and qualifications to secure local, sustainable paid employment. The initial cohort of learners spent three days a week within the facilities department at Nevill Hall Hospital.

“I am feeling excited, and I am looking forward to working in the hospital and meeting new people. I would like to build on my confidence.”

ILS Learner

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The programme has shown consistent growth and success year after year. In its first year, six students completed the supported internship, with four securing part-time employment and one sional cookery programme.

In 2022/23, eight learners completed the programme successfully, one secured an apprenticeship with the health records team in Newport and two learners gained apprenticeships with the facilities team at The Royal Gwent Hospital. Additionally, one learner obtained an apprenticeship with the health records team at Nevill Hall Hospital, and another secured part-time paid employment unrelated to the health sector. The remaining learners contributed to various volunteering projects.

Now in its third year, the programme continues to flourish, with seven learners currently enrolled and benefiting from placements within the facilities teams at Nevill Hall.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To develop partnerships with additional healthcare departments and organisations beyond current collaborations, helping to diversify the types of placements available, providing opportunities for learners to explore a broader range of career paths. Work with partners to ensure that all programme graduates are guaranteed interviews for relevant job openings, bridging the gap between training and employment.

» ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING CADET SCHEME



CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To support the introduction of the Prince of Wales, Royal College of Nursing Cadet scheme.”

Lead partners: RCN, Aneurin Bevan UHB, Coleg Gwent & USW

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

Supported by HRH Prince of Wales, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Cadet Scheme supports young people aged 16 to 25 develop their skills for a career in nursing. The scheme provides 60 hours of training which includes 20 hours of observation experience within the local health board. Once cadets have completed the course, they receive a certificate, module transcript and a special alumni pin. Learners who complete the course are guaranteed an interview for a role as a healthcare support worker.

“I enjoyed this course because it helped me to come out of my shell, learn new skills, meet new people and review case studies to prepare for the real world. I highly recommend this course to all budding nurses as it is a great way to find out if nursing is really for you!”

RCN Cadet

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

In collaboration with the RCN Nursing Cadets and ABUHB, two cadet schemes have been successfully delivered benefiting 36 health and social care learners from the Crosskeys campus of Coleg Gwent.

The first cohort completed the scheme in the academic year 2022/23, with 19 learners securing university interviews. Additionally, one learner has secured a role as a healthcare support worker. The remaining cohort of cadets are awaiting outcomes from their courses.

The second cohort, consisting of 17 learners are currently in the process of completing the programme. The third cohort of RCN Nursing Cadets began their training on Monday, 13th May. The programme was expanded to include learners from Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Crosskeys.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To extend the scheme to more campuses and communities, ensuring that a greater number of young people aged 16 to 25 can benefit from this transformative programme.

Promote inclusivity by seeking to attract more cadets from diverse backgrounds, fostering a rich and varied cohort that reflects the communities we serve.

» THE INTEGRATED SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To develop and deliver an Integrated Career Pathway Programme across Gwent schools.”

Aneurin Bevan UHB, Gwent local authorities, USW and Coleg Gwent



BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

Launched in December 2023 the integrated schools programme brings together practitioners and educators from across the local health and social care sector in Gwent. The programme offers the opportunity for secondary school pupils to get involved in activities related to specific health and social care careers and explore local qualification and career options.

The Integrated Schools Programme is a wider collaborative approach to engaging with schools via the consortium, which supplements other areas of the 'Care as Currency' work programme.

The programme aims to:

- Raise awareness amongst 14 to 16 year olds of the breadth of local health and social care career/education pathways and work opportunities.
- Raise aspirations of 14- to 16-year-olds, providing them with the confidence and knowledge to pursue a career in health and social care.
- Support the principles of the Foundational Economy through the development of skills and talents within the local community.
- Increase the presence and visibility of health and social care career pathways at all schools across Gwent.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The programme has targeted schools located in areas of high deprivation to raise the aspirations of these pupils and has, to date, delivered to approximately 190 pupils across the following locations:

- St Cenydd, Caerphilly
- Bryn Mawr, Blaenau Gwent
- Lliswerry, Newport
- Abersychan, Torfaen
- Torfaen Pupil Referral Unit

“It was such a fantastic event last week that you ran here at St Cenydd school, all pupils and staff really enjoyed it and found it so beneficial. We really appreciated the opportunity and hope you can offer this again in the future.”

Careers Wales Adviser, Caerphilly

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

Extend the offer to pupil referral units, Welsh language schools and to those young people who are home schooled. Base future activity on identified, specific roles facing workforce shortages in Gwent.

WHAT IS COMING NEXT?

WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON:

- New college course provision aimed at introducing individuals to careers in dental nursing, dental hygiene, dental technology and aesthetics
- New college Agored provision aimed at providing individuals with a fast-track opportunity to apply to join a nursing degree whilst working as a Health Care Support Worker





»» SUMMARY

The work of the Gwent Career College Consortium and its 'Care as Currency' programme is a practical response to addressing the health and social care workforce issues across Gwent. The initiatives outlined in this evaluation report aim to develop, increase and integrate the health and social care workforce, ensuring that local people have multiple opportunities to learn, train and find work in the NHS and social care at all levels.

We would like to thank all the partners within the College Consortium for what has been achieved so far but would like to conclude with a plea for further help and support from any interested parties.

To further the work of this consortium we are specifically seeking help to identify future funding opportunities to support the 'Care as Currency' work programme and to resolve some of the barriers we are facing.

We are also seeking more organisations who are willing to increase engagement with those in education particularly by offering up work placement opportunities.

We would also like to acknowledge the funding provided by Welsh Government for this year through the Knowledge Transfer Programme.

The Knowledge Transfer Programme (KTP) is designed to support colleges in Wales in the delivery of activities designed to accelerate and build expertise for staff and increase the learner's knowledge and learning experience. Health & Social Care is a priority within this programme.

Thank you for your support.