



KmEzMIWX

Tackling Bed Poverty in Wales

Entry details

Summary Overview

In December 2021, the BBC reported on the issue of bed poverty for children in Leeds. It was something that we had never heard of. As a direct result some speculative emails were sent to our partners to see if this was reflective within the community of Swansea Bay University Health Board. The response was a resounding 'yes'. Armed with this information, we set about how we could address this within our communities and how we could resolve the issue.

With the support of NWSSP Procurement Services, the Health Board was going to be decommissioning the Bay Field Hospital this year and has a large number of surplus beds that are unsuitable for the acute or community health sector these would be ideal to donate to families and those people in greatest need within our community.

A small working group was established that consisted of representatives from Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Council, and Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Community Voluntary Services.

The project gained a great deal of recognition on a national level and has since been replicated on an All Wales basis helping thousands more people.

I wish to nominate the following person (or group/organisation) for award. I understand that by submitting this nomination I declare that the information I have provided is – to the best of my knowledge – accurate and complete. ✓

Nominee	NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership - Procurement Services and Swansea Bay University Health Board
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Supporting Info

Supporting Statement

Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy estimates that over 200,000 or 1 in 3 children in Wales live in poverty. This is supported by research from the children's charity Buttle which evidences how almost 30% of families on low incomes struggled to afford beds for their children in 2020.

The report states how families and children are sleeping on floors for periods of time because they don't have their own bed. Children are sleeping on old mattress' or cushions on the floor because parents can't afford a frame, often these mattresses or cushions are infested with bed bugs. The research has shown that disadvantaged children are already 18 months educationally behind their peers. Lack of sleep, due to not having a bed leads to poor concentration levels and lower educational attainment which in the long term will only widen the inequalities gap that exists within our community.

The impact of Adverse Childhood Experience's (ACEs) are well understood to be a barrier to giving children the best start in life and the opportunity to achieve their potential. The Report on the 5th Annual Child and Family Poverty Surveys 2021 by Children In Wales highlighted poverty and the impacts of poverty which clearly affects children, young people and their families. The reality is that sadly many children within our community are hungry and families are in debt. Children are trapped in intergenerational cycles of lifelong hardship and disadvantage.

By being proactive the Health Board can play its part in preventing childhood adversity and mitigating its impact alongside individuals and members of our communities.

The Health Board was shortly going to be decommissioning the Bay Field Hospital and had a large number of beds (600) that were unsuitable for the acute sector. However, they were sturdy enough for use in domestic settings, and would be ideal to donate to families and those people in greatest need within our community.

Procurement were heavily involved in equipping sites across the Health Board. Likewise, support was sought from Procurement regarding the governance and logistics considerations and support, that would have to be addressed before any final decisions were made.

Allocating these beds to people in greatest need within our communities is likely to realise positive health outcomes by changing a child's or a person's life and their future life chances.

As the beds in the Bay were not being utilised and did not form part of the surge capacity, there was a real opportunity to make a positive difference to the lives of many Swansea Bay residents facing adversity. It is likely that people who were living without a proper bed to sleep in or who are sleeping on floors or sharing single beds would encounter health problems, that only increased their likelihood of admittance into our hospitals thereby placing greater stress on our services.

A paper was prepared which was supported by the Director of Finance and Head of Procurement. Governance approvals were sought from the Health Board and Welsh Government.

A small working group of 6 was established which included Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Council and Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Community Voluntary Services. The teams and the organisations that they support are front line and work within our communities and therefore were best placed to identify those people and families in greatest need. A simple form was devised that we could distribute to the teams that could be returned to us that we could keep to ensure from an audit perspective we had a trail.

In addition to distributing these beds to those greatest in need, we launched an intranet campaign requesting that our staff to donate new duvets or pillows, and also new, or freshly-laundered good condition, single sheets and duvet sets so that they can accompany the beds when distributed. Due to the rising cost of living crisis we know that they are struggling to purchase food let alone furniture to furnish their homes. If members of our community are not in a position to purchase a bed, then they are unlikely to be able to afford the bedding that goes with it. Local supermarkets and companies were also very supportive of what we were doing and donated lots of new bedding to us also. When the news broke about what we were doing and the story went into the media, the public were amazing and wanted to help and donated a great deal of new bedding to us which we have been able to distribute.

Our community dental teams donated dental packs too.

When a person received a bed, they had a bed, full set of new bedding and a dental pack.

Local removal firm Britannia Robbins heard about what were doing and kindly offered their services free of charge and delivered the beds for us. We used the hashtag 'delivering smiles' because when the beds were delivered, it was reported that families were living in dire conditions and had nothing, the children's faces when they received a bed was beyond heart-warming as they were so excited to receive a new bed.

We had a great deal of positive publicity. At the start of the project the war in Ukraine had begun, we were approached by The Senedd asking if we could assist with the refugees fleeing Ukraine and going to Moldova and also those refugees coming into Wales and were being housed by host families. Many of the host families had a single or a double bed, by donating additional beds it meant that families could live together.

Talking about bed poverty certainly raised awareness. One teacher in Swansea emailed to thank us for raising awareness and also to thank us for donating beds to children in her school. 'We hear it all the time, children sharing beds, sleeping on sofa's, I even knew of one child that slept in a bath tub'

The biggest and proudest achievement is that Welsh Government realised based on the number of requests that we received was that bed poverty was a much bigger issue in Wales that was ever believed. They approved that this initiative was to be rolled out on an All Wales basis and that all surplus beds from the field hospitals should be utilised in this way which meant that thousands of people, children and families now have a bed to sleep in that they did not have before, which had a direct impact upon reducing inequalities in health in Wales and allowing children the opportunity to sleep at night, which will in turn allow them to learn at school and have better life chances going forward.

I was invited to speak at the Wellbeing & Future Generations Conference to share our story about what we did and how we did it.

We've met with Childrens Commissioner for Wales policy lead to look at how we can help children in the future.

PHW are to undertake a case study looking at the health impact that this has made on an All Wales basis.

WRAP Cymru are currently undertaking a case study looking at the waste to landfill saved and how we have contributed to the circular economy.

We were a small working group of 6 and had never worked together previously. Too many people in a meeting makes it a 'talking shop' and nothing would be achieved. Action was required & time was of the essence. It was winter time, we couldn't leave children sleeping on floors or substandard sleeping conditions. We became aware of this issue at the end of December 2021, within a few months, we had received appropriate approvals, identified families and allocated the beds to those in greatest need, Together we were focused, and worked extremely well. Everyone was equal, everyone had a voice, was heard & had a part to play. Together we have been able to make tangible difference to the lives of so many people not only in Swansea Bay but throughout Wales and of that we are extremely proud.

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