

Developing Advanced Paramedic Practitioners in Primary Care

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Background

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) were awarded Welsh Government Pacesetter¹ funding to examine the viability of a 3 part rotational model of working. The model was established to utilise the skills of knowledge of nine WAST Advanced Paramedic Practitioners (APPs) in North Wales. The rotation (represented in the image below) incorporated shifts in BCUHB Primary Care sites, WAST Clinical Contact Centre and deployment on response vehicles.

The Primary Care Model for Wales (2019)² advocates for multi skilled members of the workforce to ensure the sustainability of services. This Pacesetter project will test and evaluate the role of the APP in Primary Care and their emerging contribution to the new model for Wales.



Methods

This service evaluation examines the role of the APP in a Primary Care setting. Each Primary Care Cluster involved with the project defined its preferred approach to develop a model for implementation based on local need. These models ranged from a home visiting service to a fully integrated member of the Practice Team.

In order to evaluate each Cluster, the project team developed a questionnaire to capture feedback from a Primary Care perspective which was undertaken eight months into the project.



Eight of the APPs from Cohort 1 on the Pacesetter programme

Results

- Eight respondents (comprising a GP, Practice Managers and Cluster Coordinators) completed the questionnaire hosted on the Smart Survey platform.
- Responses were received from staff in four Cluster areas in North Wales.

References

1. Primary Care One. All Wales Pacesetter Programme. Available from: <http://www.primarycareone.wales.nhs.uk/all-wales-pacesetter-programme> [Accessed: 06 January 2021]
2. Primary Care One. Primary Care Model for Wales. Available from: [http://www.primarycareone.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1191/Primary%20Care%20Model%20for%20Wales%20written%20description%20-%20April%202019%20\(Eng\).pdf?text=The%20Primary%20Care%20Model%20for%20Wales%20must%20be%20supported%20multi-%20professional%20working%20and%20telephone%20systems](http://www.primarycareone.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1191/Primary%20Care%20Model%20for%20Wales%20written%20description%20-%20April%202019%20(Eng).pdf?text=The%20Primary%20Care%20Model%20for%20Wales%20must%20be%20supported%20multi-%20professional%20working%20and%20telephone%20systems) [Accessed: 06 January 2021].



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- Respondents reported that implementation had gone as planned.
- Clusters reviewed and adapted the model to ensure it continued to meet local need e.g. additional surgery clinics, review travel.
- Challenges encountered included lack of physical office/consultation space and limited availability of APPs due to the rotational model.
- There was consensus that for future cohorts it would be beneficial to involve APPs in surgery clinics from the start of the rotation.
"We would implement clinics, then home visiting...this would give the APP's a broader experience of clinical demand"
- Suggestions to optimise the success of the project centred on staffing resources for example additional clinical mentorship.
"Having someone to co-ordinate the visits would help and would ensure fair distribution of visits across the four practices."
- One of the greatest benefits reported by practices was that APPs increased capacity for GPs.
"The paramedics relieve pressure on the surgeries both with home visits and clinics when working. As their clinical supervisor...I have seen them become better, independent, confident clinicians."
- It was hoped that benefits from the project would contribute to future sustainability in Primary Care.
"The project has definitely improved GP capacity and presence within the practice as the time previously spent on GP visits has decreased dramatically. This has a major impact on sustainability of Primary Care in the area and is welcomed by all GPs, which will in the future, hopefully, help attract and retain GPs to the area."
- The Clusters were keen to invest in APPs and develop the role in future.
"I hope we can develop their roles further to help avoid hospital admissions and support elderly patients at home."
- Respondents praised the support of the project team and positive collaboration between BCUHB, WAST and Public Health Wales who supported the Cluster and project evaluation.

Conclusion

Early findings from the evaluation have demonstrated that APPs are well placed to undertake a variety of tasks within Primary Care that are not limited to home visiting and care of the elderly in residential / nursing homes.

The findings of this evaluation will be shared on an all Wales basis with Local Health Boards, Primary Care Clusters and Welsh Ambulance Services to inform future planning intentions both at a national and local level.

