

Healthy workplace
Healthy workforce
Healthy business



Cymru Iach ar Waith
Healthy Working Wales

Healthy Working Wales Covid-19 Commendation Event 2021

Summary of Key Themes from Employer Entries

December 2021



Healthy workplace Healthy workforce Healthy business



Background

Healthy Working Wales is a Welsh Government programme delivered by Public Health Wales to support employers in Wales to create healthy and safe workplaces and promote health and wellbeing among their staff. The HWW strapline is: Healthy workplace, Healthy workforce, Healthy business. This highlights the symbiotic relationship between health and work.

HWW provides employers with health advisor support, training events, workshops, information and guidance. HWW is developing a new model of delivery that includes online survey tools to identify employers' priority areas for health and wellbeing and inform the development of action plans.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Healthy Working Wales has supported employers to keep their workforces safe, wherever they are working, and prevent Covid-19 transmission.

Introduction

In December 2021, Healthy Working Wales delivered a virtual Covid-19 Commendation Event to recognise employers' efforts in supporting the health and wellbeing of their staff, clients and the wider community during the pandemic. The event showcased a range of employers' achievements in adapting and rising to the challenges of a turbulent period. There were also many examples of best practice in relation to health and wellbeing initiatives. A total of 55 submissions were received from employers from a wide range of sectors and of varying sizes. There were 6 award categories covering mental and physical health and wellbeing, best internal and external response to the pandemic, as well as sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion. Full details of the categories can be found in Appendix A along with a summary of the winners and runners up.

Special thanks have been expressed to our judging panel (highlighted in Appendix B) who committed significant time and energy to review all the entries and undertake the difficult task of identifying the winning entries. Thanks and gratitude is also given to our speakers at the event including

the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Lynne Neagle MS, as well as Jan Williams, Chair of Public Health Wales, Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer for Wales, and Mary-Ann McKibben, Consultant Lead for Healthy Working Wales. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

This document provides a high level summary of the key themes that arose from the submissions, highlighting the range of innovative activities and approaches undertaken by the employers.

In terms of making the workplace safe in the context of Covid-19 , many measures have become standard practice for employers. The breadth and range of approaches to promoting both physical and mental wellbeing are captured in a Healthy Working Wales report [Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Employer Innovation and Best Practice](#) together with ten in-depth employer case studies.

This report provides an overview of the wealth of activities undertaken by employers that entered for a Covid-19 commendation against a series of key themes covering many aspects of health and wellbeing:

- Encouraging and Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Team Building
- Staff Communications and Training
- Promoting Physical Wellbeing Activities
- Keeping Employees and Others Safe
- Heightening Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures
- Introducing Covid Policies
- Staff Engagement, Recognition and Support
- Community Support
- Protecting the Community
- Reaching out to the Community
- Digital Communications
- Making Sustainable Changes
- Equality and Inclusion

As well as congratulating the winners and runners up, thanks and congratulations are extended to all the employers who took the time to enter for their adaptability and creativity in responding to the pandemic and their commitment to protecting and supporting their staff, clients and the wider community.

Encouraging and Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many of the employers who submitted entries outlined how they had sought to encourage and promote the mental health and wellbeing of their employees during these unprecedented times; for example, [Cardiff University](#) raised awareness of the importance of mental health and

wellbeing and the support available to staff through workshops, induction processes, the staff intranet and internal communications while [Transport for Wales](#) set up a Staff Wellbeing Action Group which ran campaigns to support staff and keep them engaged and active, providing practical and emotional support to anyone who needed it.

Employers recognised that many of their employees were likely to be feeling the strains of the pandemic on their mental wellbeing and aimed to provide relief to those affected. Some developed new ways of working to support staff suffering from isolation such as [Case-UK Limited](#) with the establishment of a digital 'Case Café' where employees from across Wales could engage with their peers in a variety of online wellbeing activities. [RCS](#) introduced individual wellbeing plans and a facility for staff to make a confidential, anonymous approach to a therapist for up to 6 sessions of fully-funded support.

Some employers also explored the range of health and wellbeing apps on the market, for example [Gower College Swansea](#) provided access to the 'Headspace' app to staff which focuses on mindfulness and reducing levels of stress. Other employers supported their employees by providing physically calming environments such as [BCB International's](#) creation of a wellbeing garden for staff to use and relax in a tranquil space.

Many employers were interested in boosting the training of key staff on the topic of mental health, especially line managers, and [ParamedicsRUs.com](#) trained 100 people in a wide range of companies to be better able to deal with mental wellbeing issues and help reduce the stigma associated with talking about mental health and requesting help.

Team Building

Many employers put on team building activities to maintain and improve employee mental wellbeing such as [Nice-Pak International](#) - responding to the statistic that 18 people lose their life to suicide each day, staff aimed to complete a minimum of 18km (between the team) every day for 18 days in a row, which created a sense of togetherness and achievement within the team. Other employers, such as [Acorns Nurseries](#), created specific wellbeing teams and incorporated various activities including quiz nights and weekly fun days, to further improve the morale of the team which continued until the end of the first lockdown, providing support during a period where people were particularly feeling the stress brought on by uncertainty.

Staff Communications and Training

Communication within the workplace is essential to creating a healthy working environment and many employers recognised this during the

pandemic, feeling that strong communication between staff across the organisation was essential to creating supportive environments to bring teams together at a universally difficult time. Several, including [BCB International](#), incorporated more frequent team meetings into the week to ensure staff felt supported and connected, particularly since many employees had switched to remote working over the course of the pandemic.

Promoting Physical Wellbeing Activities

As well as mental wellbeing, several employers highlighted how important it was to look after staff physical wellbeing. Some organised physical challenges with a particular theme such as [Cardiff University](#) staff walking to the moon or [Nice-Pak International](#)'s team exercise challenges, as highlighted earlier, responding to the statistic that 18 people lose their life to suicide each day. Their aim was often to capitalise on the strong relationship between physical activity and good mental health as well as to create healthy habits that could be sustained over time.

Other companies, such as [Flow Fitness at Studio 17](#), focused on expanding access to their services to the wider community to promote physical activity, help with lockdown and maintain morale. [CGI](#) offered a variety of long-term healthy initiatives to benefit their employees' physical wellbeing, including twelve weeks of live virtual yoga and a three-month step challenge.

Keeping Employees and Others Safe

A high priority for businesses, but particularly throughout the pandemic, has been the safety of employees and others visiting the physical workplace. All employers introduced measures to protect their staff and to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Employers wanted to ensure staff felt safe in the working environment. [Bluestone Resorts Limited](#) created a 'feel safe, stay safe' mantra for staff and guests alike with the aim of prioritising the wellbeing of its workforce over the course of the pandemic. Similarly [NPTC Group of Colleges](#) responded by taking a unified approach, with a specific focus on keeping students learning and everyone within the college safe by prioritising health and safety alongside blended learning as well as reiterating key public health and government messages.

Many employers such as [Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd](#) made provisions to allow staff to work from home where possible, carrying out risk assessments and providing guidelines for home working so that staff could work remotely in a safe environment. Others such as [Tata Steel UK](#) not only issued home test kits to staff but rapidly set up a mass testing

site at work to establish robust precautionary measures, protect staff and keep the business operating.

Heightening Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures

Employers endeavoured to ensure that workplaces were 'Covid secure' with improved infection prevention and control protocols, for example [Crown Fitness Club](#) developed an in-depth cleaning programme which went well above and beyond minimum measures. [Safran Seats](#) used their expertise to install cleaning stations that were designed to ensure all shared equipment could be safely utilised and manufactured in-house.

Moreover, many employers such as [Cwmni Da](#) developed and implemented comprehensive internal guidelines covering all aspects of IPC including handwashing, car sharing, use of hand gels and regular cleaning of surfaces to further ensure safety within the workplace.

Introducing Covid Policies

As soon as the pandemic started to take hold many businesses incorporated completely new policies to ensure a safe day-to-day working environment. [Bluestone Resorts Limited](#) developed a Covid Critical Incident Response Team to devise strategies for the company to navigate through significant business interruption and [Safran Seats](#) formed an expert team named 'The Alert Team' to help manage precautions across critical business functions and ensure good communications.

[HMCTS Wales](#) put together a Regional Response and Recovery Team to advise colleagues and ensure safe buildings and protection for staff and customers. [Cwmni Da](#) established the on-site role of Covid-19 supervisor or, as they soon became known, 'The Covid Cop'.

Where staff were not eligible for sick pay or unable to work from home, [PerkinElmer](#) introduced a policy providing staff with up to 10 days off at full pay at their manager's discretion to help them deal with situations where they needed time off, such as assisting dependents or covering emergency childcare.

[Qualifications Wales](#) relaxed the usual core hours structure to help staff balance their home commitments with work, and offered a top-up flexi time of up to 8 hours a week to take account of times where contracted hours were unachievable.

Staff Engagement, Recognition and Support

Some employers aimed to ensure that as a top priority staff felt valued and their hard work recognised. For example [Whitehead-Ross Education and](#)

[Consulting Ltd](#) sent personal hand-written thank you cards and small gifts to keep up staff morale. Likewise [Qualifications Wales](#) sent cards and gifts including at different times a Christmas bauble and seeds which both formed part of staff competitions.

Employers aimed to ensure staff felt as supported as possible all the way through the pandemic by prioritising regular communications and get-togethers or setting up virtual and in-person support centres. For example, [Cae'r Ffair Nursery Ltd](#) put together a tailored support network for furloughed staff providing regular Zoom calls and check-ins while [Mirus Wales](#) created a Wellbeing Hub to provide support and engage with staff and volunteers.

[Neath Port Talbot Council](#) launched a specific staff health and wellbeing website to provide support on a range of topics and engage with staff, offering wellbeing resources and training courses, while some employers put on bespoke wellbeing workshops including 'LIVEBIG at GCS', delivered by an Executive Coach to improve the wellbeing of [Gower College Swansea](#) staff during the pandemic.

As a result of the uncertain times many employers allowed for an outlet where employees could relax through engagement activities. [Melin Homes](#) organised a wide range of activities including healthy cooking lessons, yoga, personal training sessions, walking groups, mindfulness sessions and hydration campaigns to support members' health and wellbeing during lockdown. In order to reassure and support staff, several organisations such as [HM Land Registry](#) ensured that line managers kept in daily contact with their team members to discuss their wellbeing, any health concerns, caring responsibilities and workload.

Community Support

In addition to supporting employees, many organisations provided support within their local communities, with some employers actively striving to be there for those that needed help the most. [Age Connects Torfaen](#) created a community support network delivering food parcels to elderly and vulnerable residents in the area and bringing shopping to 200 homes and prescriptions to 120 people. [Hexigone Inhibitors Ltd](#) staff donated over £1000 to local charitable causes, of which the majority went to food banks.

[Denbighshire Leisure Ltd](#) implemented the Lost in Art project, an initiative which supports people with dementia and their carers by offering opportunities to meet and work on arts and crafts projects. [Your Space \(Marches\) Limited](#) developed their 'Our outreach' service to support families with various day to day activities and [Neath Port Talbot Council](#) launched their NPTSafe&Well campaign mobilised almost 700 volunteers and provided a wide variety of support to the most vulnerable people in the

community including welfare calls, food parcels, delivery of prescriptions and free school meal payments.

Protecting the Community

With the increasing importance of hygiene measures in preventing the spread of Covid-19, some protective equipment manufacturers developed innovative approaches to meet the demand for products. [Simon Safety](#) supplied PPE and high hazard work wear into critically important organisations to keep them going during the pandemic and developed new products to fill gaps identified. [BCB International](#) also helped 'protect the protectors' by supplying essential PPE to the NHS, police services and other key workers while also converting machinery to produce hand sanitiser. They donated PPE and hand sanitiser to smaller groups of key workers, such as agencies providing meals to the homeless or support to the elderly, and also donated 25,000 face masks and 10,000 face shields to medical staff in the Yemen.

[Hexigon Inhibitors Ltd](#) also innovated and started manufacturing hand sanitiser to help protect staff on the front line, donating the profits to mental health charities and food banks. [Transport for Wales](#) ensured that their transport was as Covid-secure and safe as possible for travellers. All of these actions will have certainly made an important difference in preventing the spread of the virus.

Reaching out to the Community

As many started to feel the employment and educational pressures associated with the pandemic, many businesses helped those who had been affected. [BCB International](#) reached out to a company that could not afford to keep their staff on by offering interim contracts of work and [Dwr Cymru Welsh Water](#) introduced online education provision to replace their usual education days which reached almost 6,000 children as well as developing a 360-degree virtual classroom and home learning packs that reached more than 68,000 participants.

Other ways that organisations connected with their communities during such challenging times included [Hywel Dda health board](#) actively offering employment, training, volunteer and work experience opportunities to the local population, in particular targeting more deprived or marginalised communities in the region. The team at [Groundwork North Wales](#) adapted swiftly to the pandemic to provide a full suite of their accredited courses through online platforms and, where possible, in a blended way with some learning face-to-face.

Digital Communications

Some organisations supported the community via digital communication platforms and the creative use of apps. For example, [Innovate Trust](#) developed a digital platform called 'Insight' to support people with learning disabilities across Wales through the pandemic and address loneliness and isolation, gifting devices and providing people with training and ongoing support. [HEIW](#) created a single site digital resource for health professionals with signposting to a wide variety of wellbeing resources including emotional and physical decision trees, financial advice and mental health websites and helplines.

Other organisations created online campaigns such as the 'Rainbow Challenge' by [Denbighshire Leisure Ltd](#) which provided daily fitness challenges to complete online and launched a YouTube channel to share brand new DIY videos of crafting skills for people to follow at home.

Making Sustainable Changes

Many businesses are aspiring to reduce their environmental impact and signing up to pledges to become more eco-friendly across all their activities. [Bridgend College](#) has developed a Climate Emergency Strategy which sets out a commitment to be net zero by 2040 and is leading a partnership to plant at least 60,000 trees by the end of 2025 both on campus and off campus.

[BCB International](#) have made a commitment to reducing their carbon footprint and have undertaken activities such as installing solar panels, moving to electric fleet vehicles, converting to LED lighting, participating in green space initiatives such as planting trees and converting from plastic packaging to corrugated cardboard and paper.

Equality and Inclusion

With many employers striving to be more equal and fair, some such as [GISDA](#) have committed to delivering LGBTQ+ Awareness training to all staff and include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training as part of their new in-service induction training program. Others such as [Gower College Swansea](#) made a concerted effort to progress equality and inclusion objectives and maintain engagement despite transitioning to an online model of teaching through a raft of activities using social media, virtual workshops and podcasts and attaining the College of Sanctuary Award for their inclusive culture and practices.

Our Place set up a project named 'Pots of Thought' where service users potted flowers and delivered the pots to the elderly, vulnerable and socially isolated members of the community with the aim of ensuring that people were not forgotten during the pandemic. **Bridgend College** appointed Wellbeing Advocates and took part in a Welsh Government campaign to encourage other employers to achieve Disability Confident status and contribute to creating a fairer and more inclusive society.

Appendix A

Healthy Working Wales Covid-19 Commendation Event

Winners and Runners Up in Each Category

Commendation	Project Name	Organisation
Mental Health Large		
Winner	Team-18	Nice-Pak International
Runner-up	Mental Health and Wellbeing - A Person Centred Approach	Bridgend College
Mental Health SME		
Winner	Case-UK Able Futures	Case-UK Limited
Runner Up	Free Mental Health Awareness courses	ParamedicsRUs.com
Physical Wellbeing		
Winner	CGI Physical Health & Wellbeing	CGI
Runner Up	Education & training - schools, training provider, skills development	Cardiff University
C-19 Response Internal (Large)		
Winner	Putting our people first	HM Land Registry
Runner Up	Feel Safe, Stay Safe - The Bluestone Way	Bluestone Resorts Limited
C-19 Response Internal (Small)		
Winner	Zest	Melin Homes
Runner Up	RCS Working Well	RCS
C-19 Response External		
Winner	Insight	Innovate Trust
Runner Up	NPT Safe & Well	Neath Port Talbot Council
Sustainability		
Winner	The Spiders Web - An Extraordinary Vision for Zero Emissions	Bridgend College
Runner Up	BCB International. Protecting the Protectors. Sustainability.	BCB International
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion		
Winner	GCS College of Sanctuary	Gower College Swansea
Runner Up	Cynllun Cydraddoldeb, Amrywiaeth a Chynhwysiant GISDA/ GISDA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme	GISDA

Appendix B

Healthy Working Wales Covid-19 Commendation Event

Judging Panel

The following individuals formed the judging panel for the Healthy Working Wales Covid-19 Commendations Event that took place on 8 December 2021:

- Holly MacDougall Corbin, Welsh Government Disabled People's Employment Champion
- Lesley Richards, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- Linsey Imms, Wales TUC Cymru
- Lisa Peterson, Confederation for British Industry (CBI) Wales
- Mary-Ann McKibben, Public Health Wales (Chair)
- Paul Slevin, Chambers Wales
- Sandra Donoghue, Federation of Small Businesses
- Sue Husband, Business in the Community
- Sue O'Leary, Mind Cymru



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