



# CARE AS CURRENCY

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2024-25



gwerth profiad gofal  
care as currency



# »» BACKGROUND

The Gwent Career College Consortium (the Consortium) is an innovative partnership approach to supporting the recruitment, development and qualification of health and social care workers across 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 health and social care workforce across Gwent.

Since its inception the Consortium has aimed to generate and strengthen work placements, experiential learning opportunities and develop seamless routes into health and social care careers for local student cohorts studying in Gwent.

This has been achieved through a suite of projects developed within our 'Care as Currency' programme which has been adopted as the public facing, umbrella brand of the Consortium's various projects and continuing collaborations with partners.

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

»»1

To help introduce a new source of staffing already engaged with 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 and Social Care Wales joint workforce strategy.

»»3

To ensure care has currency and value in Gwent to a broad range of people who may be seeking to enter or progress within the health and social care workforce.

This report provides an overview of the Care as Currency program for 2024/25 academic year detailing our successes, learning and future aspirations. The Consortium remains committed to developing local talent in order to meet the future health and social care workforce needs in Gwent.

# » ACCESS TO MEDICINE

LEAD: Professor Paul Edwards (ABUHB)



## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To widen access into medicine and other health professions to facilitate local development and recruitment of future doctors and allied health professionals.”

Lead partners: Coleg Gwent, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Cardiff University Medical School, Bristol University Medical School, University of South Wales, Agored Cymru

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

There is a huge shortage of doctors in Wales, evidenced by NHS Wales spending more than £140 million every year on medical locums. It is a travesty that many students in Welsh communities are unable to access medicine as a career choice because of educational and socio-economic barriers. This course supports local students to attain the educational levels and academic qualifications required for medical school. The course also helps successful students to develop professionalism, access appropriate work experience and prepare for interviews at university.

The course is accredited through Agored Cymru, and successful students are guaranteed interviews at Cardiff and Bristol Medical Schools.

The course is evolving, providing a similar pathway to other allied health professions.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The course has been running for two years with small cohorts of students. To date there have been successful alumni of the course, of no more than 10 students with three offers to medical school, 1 for veterinary medicine, 1 for dentistry, 1 for chiropractor studies, and others for degrees in medical sciences.

The course is expanding, with more than 30 students applying for the 25/26 course with 13 successful applications to date.

“The next stage will require further marketing and advertising campaigns to raise awareness of the course and increase partners within higher education so the Access to Medicine course is recognised as a viable pathway into medicine at more Universities.”

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To expand the course to enable greater access to medicine and other health professions. This will improve recruitment and retention for health professionals in Welsh communities.



# » LOCAL AUTHORITY WORK PLACEMENTS

LEAD: Hanna Ross (Regional Partnership Team)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

**“Develop more work placement opportunities for further education learners within Gwent local authorities.”**

Lead partners: Coleg Gwent, Gwent Regional Partnership Team, Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

In 2022, a collaborative approach was introduced to support health and social care learners access suitable work placements within Gwent local authorities.

The programme focuses on expanding experiential learning opportunities within the social care sector, bridging the gap between education and employment, and addressing local recruitment needs. By equipping learners with the skills and experience needed to pursue local career opportunities, it plays an important role in developing the future care workforce.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

Since the introduction of the local authority placement framework, there has been significant progress in creating meaningful placement opportunities within local authority service teams. During the 2024/25 academic year, 37 health and social care learners from Coleg Gwent gained valuable experience through placements in a variety of local authority social care settings and roles.

Torfaen County Borough Council in particular has made notable progress in expanding work placement opportunities for learners, introducing new experiences in housing and resilient communities service areas.

**“Can I please go back next year? I definitely learnt a lot there and this is something I want to do in the future, when I have finished university. I have learnt so many new skills and they’re all lovely people.”**

*Coleg Gwent H&SC learner on placement in TCBC Adult Social Services*

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

We continue to strengthen local authority work placements by expanding opportunities across a wider range of service areas in Gwent local authorities. These placements help bridge the gap between college-based learning and employment, giving learners valuable experience and clearer insight into future career options.

There is a growing focus on creating clear progression routes for learners who wish to move into employment after completing their studies at Coleg Gwent. Preparing learners with the skills, experience, and understanding needed to pursue meaningful local careers is essential to the continued success of the work placement framework.



# » ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING, KING'S NURSING CADETS

LEAD: Allison Werner (Coleg Gwent) & Sarah Hanks (USW)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To provide high-quality, collaborative learning experiences that prepare Health and Social Care learners for future careers in nursing and associated health care roles.”

Lead partners: University of South Wales, Coleg Gwent, Royal College of Nursing, ABUHB



## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

Supported by HRH King Charles III, The Royal College of Nursing, King's Nursing Cadet Scheme helps young people develop their skills and support them towards a career in nursing.

The University of South Wales has played a pivotal role in supporting the RCN Cadet Scheme across South Wales. Through open days, workshops, application support, and portfolio guidance, USW staff have helped cadets explore pathways into healthcare, boosting confidence, skills, and supporting their transition into higher education.

### Delivery within Coleg Gwent provides:

- » 20 hours of observational clinical experience, watching nursing staff in action
- » An understanding of how to pursue a role in nursing
- » A certificate you can share with potential employers to help you stand out from the crowd
- » The opportunity to meet other young people interested in caring for people with health needs
- » The chance to become an ambassador and inspire future cadets.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

The student recruitment team at the University of South Wales continues to provide advice and guidance to RCN Cadets across Wales. This includes, UCAS application support, 121 personal statement guidance, online mock interviews, and NHS Wales Bursary information. As part of the scheme USW also offer guaranteed interviews for a student's chosen career pathway. Across this academic year Coleg Gwent have successfully supported two cohorts of the RCN Nursing Cadets programme, engaging 40 Level 3 Year 1 Health and Social Care learners. For the first time, students from all campuses took part, marking a significant milestone in inclusivity and collaboration. Despite the logistical challenges, this achievement highlights the outstanding partnership between the University of South Wales, Coleg Gwent, the Royal College of Nursing, and ABUHB, enabling placements across five hospitals.

“The Cadet Scheme gave me the opportunity to upskill my pre-existing knowledge from my college course. It has helped me to continue on my journey to become a qualified Midwife.”

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To continue to work in partnership with ABUHB in order to grow the RCN Cadet Scheme not just in Gwent but across Wales. Within Gwent our aspiration is to enhance placement opportunities across hospitals and facilities. We are committed to maintaining equitable access for learners from all Coleg Gwent campuses and embedding the programme as a key enrichment opportunity within Health and Social Care education.

# » RCN WALES HEALTH CARE CONNECT

LEAD: Owain Jones (USW)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

**To widen participation and create alternative, accessible pathways into nursing and midwifery education for individuals who narrowly miss traditional entry requirements.**

Lead partners: RCN Wales, University of South Wales, NHS Wales, HEIW, Coleg Gwent, Cardiff & Vale College

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

The RCN Connect Programme was launched in 2023 to address nurse shortages and support entry into the profession for underrepresented groups. This hybrid model blends paid employment in healthcare with day-release academic study in college, supporting transition into nursing education.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

Expanded to multiple sites across Wales with a pan-Wales rollout confirmed for 2025.

Over 15% of this second cohort came from the 10% most deprived areas of Wales.

Beneficiaries included recent school leavers, mature learners, and those seeking a career change into healthcare.

**This programme is removing structural barriers to education and providing hope and opportunity to a new generation of healthcare professionals.**

*RCN Wales Representative*

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

To embed the model nationally as a recognised entry route into healthcare education and expand the offer to allied health professions.



# » ABUHB CLINICAL WORK PLACEMENTS

LEAD: Allison Werner (Coleg Gwent)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

“To bridge the gap between classroom learning and real world practice by developing and facilitating clinical work placements for learners. Developing the foundational skills, values, and confidence required for professional roles in health or social care settings.”

Lead partners: Coleg Gwent and ABUHB

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

The clinical placement programme was initiated in 2022 in response to a recognised gap between classroom-based learning and real-world experience in health care settings for Level 3 Health and Social Care students.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the urgent need for learners to be fully work-ready upon completing the Level 3 Extended Diploma. This initiative aimed to better prepare students for direct entry into roles such as Health Care Support Workers within the local health board, supporting workforce recruitment and ensuring learners are equipped with the practical skills and confidence needed in a clinical environment.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

This academic year marked a significant milestone, with a student securing a placement with the Welsh Ambulance Service in the Accident and Emergency department for the first time. This opportunity also included valuable insight into emergency call handling. The learner's prior involvement with the RCN Nursing Cadets programme during their first year at college played a key role in making this placement possible, equipping them with the necessary experience and professionalism.

There has been a notable increase in the number of students across the college expressing interest in the clinical placement programme. Many successfully completed their placements, which strengthened university applications, particularly for nursing degree programmes. In addition, several learners have applied to join the local health board's Resource Bank as Health Care Support Workers, reflecting the programme's positive influence on employment readiness and career progression.

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

Continue to build on widening the range of placement settings to include, community care, maternity, learning disabilities, and allied health professions, offering students a wider view of career paths in health and social care.

Align placements with clear career progression routes, such as Health Care Support Worker to Registered Nurse apprenticeships or degree programmes, providing students with visible and supported career pathways.





# » SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS (ILS) LEARNERS

LEAD: Allison Werner and Gary Handley (Coleg Gwent)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

**“To continue to support paid employment opportunities for young people with a range of additional learning needs and/or disabilities (ILS learners) by providing opportunities for enhanced supported work placements and internships.”**

Lead partners: Coleg Gwent, Aneurin Bevan University Hospital Board (ABUHB) and ELITE Supported Employment Agency LTD.



## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

This project in one shape or another is continuing to grow across all FE Colleges in Wales and is part of an over-arching UK initiative that is strongly supported by Welsh Government. Such enhanced work experience schemes provide opportunities for young people with additional learning needs and/or disabilities, to have specialist job coach support to allow them to develop their confidence and skills in real work settings. Nevill Hall Hospital continues to provide many such opportunities in roles within its caretaking, administrative and catering work areas.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

Eleven young people started the programme this year at Nevill Hall Hospital, with one moving into paid employment. This is compared to a cohort of nine in the previous year.

**“I have become a lot more confident since starting the role and have gained social and organisational skills, which are helping me become a lot more independent. My favourite part of the job is getting to meet and help people every day. I am a people person, so love being around so many new people. Working on the reception has really helped me to build my confidence and improve my work skills. I now want to get a part-time job and eventually build up to a full-time job.”**

*Coleg Gwent ILS Learner*

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

We are also working with other colleges in Wales to provide all beneficiaries with a portable record of achievement to allow them to better showcase the skills and confidence they have been able to demonstrate whilst in a work-based setting.

Overall, there remains a need to continue to both celebrate and build on good practice in this area. We need 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 pathways. We also want to work with partners to ensure that all programme graduates are guaranteed interviews for relevant job openings, bridging the gap between training and sustained employment.



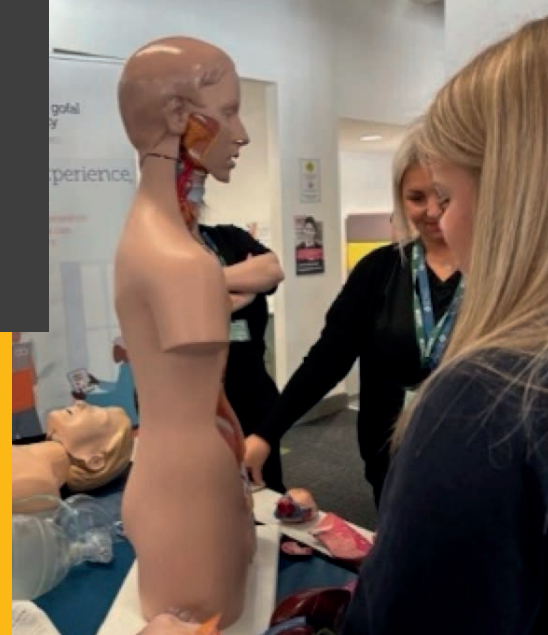
# » INTEGRATED SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

LEAD: Chris Hooper (Regional Partnership Team) & Lisa Mcleod (ABUHB)

## CONSORTIUM KEY OBJECTIVE

**To develop and deliver an integrated health and social care career pathway programme across Gwent schools.**

Lead partners: Gwent Regional Partnership Team, Gwent local authorities, Aneurin Bevan UHB, USW, Careers Wales, WeCare Wales



## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFIED:

The Integrated Schools Programme has been a transformative initiative, delivering experiential learning to secondary school pupils across Gwent.

### The intention is:

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

**“It was amazing, and the staff were super nice! It was really enjoyable.”**

*Yr 10 Pupil, Lliswerry School*

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES TO DATE:

In 2024/25 the programme has been successfully delivered in 10 secondary schools and one local training provider, engaging and inspiring well over 500 learners. Its success and innovative approach were recognised with a nomination for an Outstanding Achievement Award at the 2025 Careers Wales Awards.

Following the delivery of the programme at St Cenydd School in Caerphilly, there has been a notable increase in the number of pupils opting to take the Health and Social Care GCSE. Additionally, the school has seen a rise in applications to medical school post-A Levels, demonstrating the programme's effectiveness in guiding students towards careers in the health and social care sector.

**“The session had a wide range of different careers which helped expand my knowledge about the number of jobs in the sector.”**

*Yr 10, Ebbw Fawr Pupil*

## FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

The Integrated Schools Programme aims to broaden its impact by extending its offer to a diverse range of learners across Gwent. This includes young people enrolled with training providers, attending Welsh medium schools, and those being electively home schooled.

By expanding the programme's reach, we are committed to creating an inclusive educational environment that caters to the unique needs of all students. Our goal is to inspire and engage every learner, providing them with the tools and experiences necessary to pursue their aspirations and achieve their full potential.

# » EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

## » PRIMARY SCHOOL

- Royal College of Psychiatrists Debates
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health
- Careersville
- Billy the Superhero: Teacher Resource - We Care Wales
- ABUHB / HEIW Pilot - Syrjeri Sgiliau / Skills Surgery

## » SECONDARY SCHOOL

- Royal College of Psychiatrists Summer School
- Work experience
- RCN Nurse Cadets
- Student Placements
- Integrated Schools Programme
- Ad-Hoc School Careers Events
- Seren Foundation
- Welsh Baccalaureate
- Exploring Careers in Adult Social Care
- Level 1 Vocational Qualifications
- Welsh Language Events
- Careersville
- Introduction to Childcare Pilot
- Social Care GCSE
- Active Offer to Welsh language

## » 6TH FORM / COLLEGE

- Royal College of Psychiatrists Summer School
- Cardiff University Summer School for Teenagers (Yr12 and up)
- Seren Academy - Cardiff University School of Medicine Summer School
- University of South Wales Summer School (Deprivation & EDI - Yr12 and up)
- Cardiff University Step Up Programme Connects Course
- WeCare Wales
- Active Offer to Welsh
- Welsh Baccalaurate
- Exploring Careers in Adult Social Care
- Work Experience
- Student Placements - Local Authority Social Care Teams
- Health & Social Care Work Placements
- RCN Nurse Cadets
- Supported Internships
- Access to Medicine
- Dental Nursing (New Course)
- Fast Track to Nursing
- Careers Events
- Medical Work Experience
- Doctoriais Yfory-Tomorrow's Doctors

## » BRIDGE EMPLOYMENT

- Volunteer route to career pathway
- Social Care Apprenticeship
- Social Care Volunteering
- Social Care Work Experience
- More Than Just Words plan
- We Care Wales
- Apprenticeships
- Volunteering
- Flexible Nursing Course
- Higher Education Relevant Degree
- Resource Bank
- Graduate Scheme
- Network 75

## » CAREER PATHWAY ROUTES

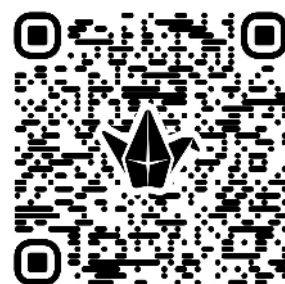
- Primary Care Academy
- Apprenticeships into paid employment
- Graduates into paid employment
- Finance Academy into paid employment ABUHB
- Nurse Streaming in ABUHB
- Network 75 in ABUHB
- Junior Doctor rotations into paid employment ABUHB
- Support internships into paid employment ABUHB
- General Recruitment
- Physicians Associate
- Social Work Sponsorship Programme

# »» RESOURCES

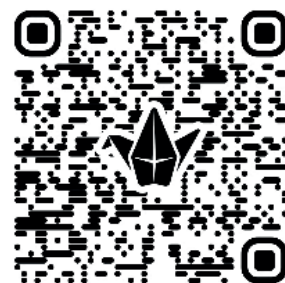
The Consortium has also developed career pathway Padlets for adult social care which detail roles and routes into the sector. These have been shared with local secondary schools and our partners in Careers Wales, WeCare Wales, Social Care Wales and local job centres. Similar resources are currently being developed for childcare and early years careers.

“It is crucial that we attract young people into local health and social care roles in Gwent. Inspiring, developing and recruiting young people helps to diversify the workforce while creating a sustainable pipeline of skilled staff for the future that can deliver for all our citizens. It is wonderful that the innovative, partnership approach of the Consortium continues to benefit local students, inspiring our next generation of health and social care professionals.”

*Jason O'Brien Strategic Director of Children and Family Services, Torfaen and Chair of the Gwent Workforce Board.*

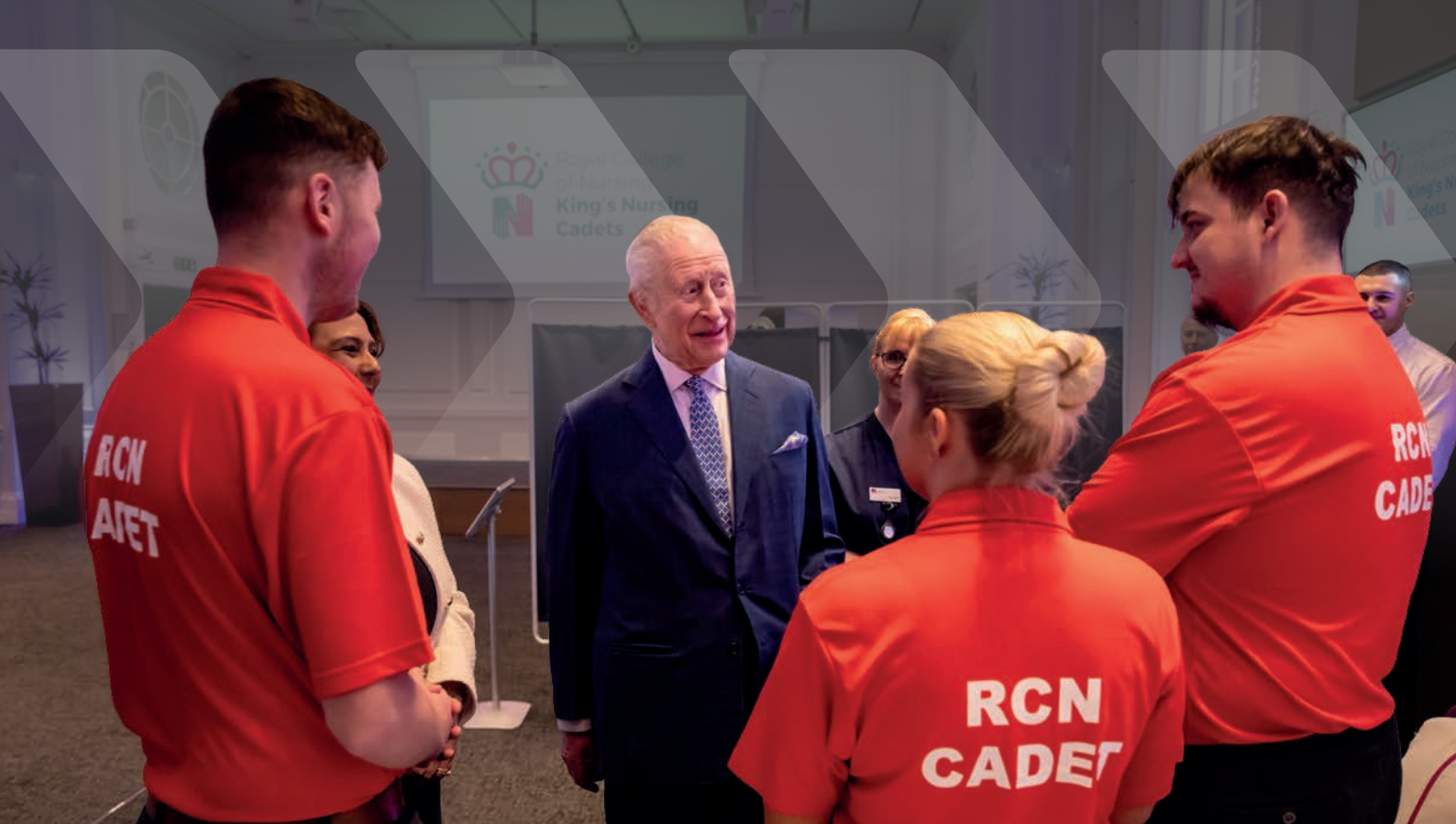


English Language  
Adult Social Care Padlet



Welsh Language  
Adult Social Care Padlet





## >> SUMMARY

The future of health and social care delivery in Wales will have a strong focus on collaborative and integrated ways of working alongside preventing illness and wellbeing. The utilisation of digital technologies to support person centred care delivery and community care will also be important. The Consortium remains committed to developing, delivering and enhancing health and social care course delivery that meet these areas of focus alongside wider employer requirements.

The recent announcement from the current UK Government to phase out overseas recruitment for social care means that it has become doubly imperative that we continue to inspire and educate our young people if we are to meet our future health and social care workforce requirements across Gwent. Ultimately there is still work to do and we would like to widen and strengthen our partnerships with our commissioned providers and employers to bridge the gap between education and local employment. We would also like to creatively overcome some of the barriers that challenge young people entering the sector from hidden costs to a lack of awareness of local roles and career pathways.

We also recognise the need to try and continue to recruit individuals into this sector from all socio-economic backgrounds and from all sections of the many diverse communities within our locality.

In partnership with WeCare Wales and Social Care Wales plans are underway to deliver the Introduction to Social Care to level 3, Year 1 health and social care students in the next academic year. The course will provide an overview of working in social care and help prepare students to get the most from their work placements. Level 3 learners will complete a week of training with the shorter 1 day course delivered to level 2 learners.

We would like to thank all the partners within the Consortium for continuing to support our program of work and the practitioners who have volunteered their valuable time, skills and knowledge to enhance the delivery of these initiatives over the past year.

If you would like to find out more about the work of the Gwent Career College Consortium please contact: [GwentRegionalPartnershipBoard@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:GwentRegionalPartnershipBoard@torfaen.gov.uk)