

Thinking of joining our team?



a guide to working for NHS Direct Wales

**Galw** **IECHYD** *Cymru*

**NHS** *Direct Wales*

## welcome

Thank you for your interest in working for NHS Direct Wales. We hope that you find this pack useful in your decision to apply and that each page will help you learn more about the service.

We take great pride in the service that our staff deliver. Ever since our inception we have endeavoured to attract some of the most talented and enthusiastic staff in the NHS.

We make sure that all our staff are clear about their roles, receiving specifically tailored inductions followed by regular dedicated "down-time" training days. By investing in each of our employees we encourage your personal and professional development, and together we can help the service achieve its long-term goals.

We value and promote the input staff can give to the way we work and encourage all to get involved in key decisions. You can make a real difference to the way we do things.

If you are attracted to excellence and you think you can add to our dynamic team, then find out more about us in this pack, complete an application form and soon you could be joining NHS Direct Wales.

Thank you

The Management Team

## what is NHS Direct Wales?



NHS Direct Wales is a bilingual telephone help line providing 24-hour health advice and information to people throughout Wales. Our guiding principle is to provide the population of Wales with advice and information about health, illness and the NHS, so that everyone is better able to care for themselves and their family.

In February 1999 the National Assembly for Wales, via the Specialist Health Services Commission for Wales, commissioned NHS Direct Wales as a bilingual service for the people of Wales. NHS Direct Wales was developed as a new system for the provision of health information and advice to the general public. The service is a response to the desire for increased patient empowerment. It is also a recognition that the NHS is a complex, multi-layered system that can be confusing for service users.

NHS Direct Wales enables people to make decisions about their own or their family's health by providing advice and evidence-based information. We also act as a 24-hour signpost, directing people to the most appropriate level of care. Since the launch of our first site in June 2000, the service has opened two further sites and covers the whole of Wales, a population of nearly 3 million.

NHS Direct Wales now handles over 30,000 calls each month. In addition to the bilingual telephone help line, we have continued to develop a range of multi-channel services including our website [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk), with information available in 30 languages, and a Minicom/ Textphone service for the hearing impaired. Information can be made available in Braille and on cassette tape whilst a translation and interpretation service is available at no cost to the caller, enabling access to the service in over 120 languages.

NHS Direct Wales offers unparalleled public access to health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



## where will I work?

NHS Direct Wales operates from three sites across Wales, taking in much of what the country has to offer. From the lush Usk valley close to the Brecon Beacons and the vibrant and busy city of Swansea, up to the mountains of Snowdonia and the castles of the north, there is so much to explore from each of our bases.

With three stunning National Parks and over 750 miles of coast, Wales has much to offer the sports enthusiast, the laid back beach-goer and families of all ages. The history of one of the world's oldest civilisations can be explored when discovering its many castles and forts, including World Heritage sites at Conwy and Harlech.

Bustling market towns and small villages stretch out amongst the beautiful countryside, while cities like Swansea and the capital, Cardiff, are cosmopolitan and forward-looking. Cardiff houses the Millennium Stadium, built to host the 1999 Rugby World Cup and which now hosts both major sporting events and entertainment. In 1997 Wales was given a measure of semi-independence and now has its own Welsh Assembly Government with responsibility for policies and public services. The Welsh language has equal status with English and is celebrated at cultural festivals such as the National Eisteddfod of Wales.



Castle Gardens, Swansea

### Swansea

Our main site and management centre is based on the Enterprise Park in Swansea. At the heart of South Wales, Swansea is a vibrant multi-cultural city with a vast range of shops, places for eating out and a busy nightlife. The birthplace of both poet Dylan Thomas and film star Catherine Zeta Jones, the city has much to offer in the world of arts and entertainment. Wales' 'city by the sea' has a fantastic new Marina and Maritime Quarter and the picturesque resort of Mumbles extends the waterfront experience with its beautiful bays and sporting opportunities from surfing and water skiing to sailing. Known as the gateway to the Gower, Swansea is a perfect base to visit the spectacular coastal scenery of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Swansea is situated along the M4 corridor with easy links to the north, southwest England and the Midlands. Swansea railway station is on the main west coast line from London Paddington; the city also has a direct ferry link with Cork. Cardiff International Airport is only 50 minutes away by road.



Rhossilli Bay, Gower peninsula



## where will I work?

### Bangor

Bangor, the historic university and cathedral city, lies on the banks of the Menai Straits overlooking the island of Anglesey. Flanked by the dramatic mountains of Snowdonia and close to the World Heritage Sites of Caernarfon, Conwy and Beaumaris Castles, Bangor is a great point from which to explore all that North Wales has to offer. Bangor itself is a principal shopping centre with a wide variety of places to eat and many High Street names.

The A55 expressway along the North Wales coast means fast access to the main UK motorway network. Train connections can be made at many stations, including Crewe, Cardiff, and London (Euston). There is a ferry link from Ireland to Holyhead and Manchester International Airport is only 1.5 hours drive away.



Conwy Castle & the mountains of Snowdonia



Tintern Abbey, near Chepstow

### Gwent

Our Gwent site is located near the historic market town of Pontypool. Dominated by 150 acres of Pontypool Park, on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, the area offers a wide range of cultural and leisure experiences, from medieval castles and green valleys to excellent shopping and sporting facilities. Close to the beautiful Wye and Usk Valleys, the area is also host to a number of cultural events from the annual Big Cheese festival to the 2004 National Eisteddfod of Wales.

Pontypool is located in South East Wales and is accessible from all directions via the M4 corridor, M50 link to the Midlands and A465 to the South Wales Valleys. It is close to the coastal town of Newport and less than 30 minutes drive to Cardiff.

For more information

[www.visitwales.com](http://www.visitwales.com)

[www.bbc.co.uk/wales](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales)

[www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)

HOWIS, the official website of NHS Wales, is a seamless service bringing together information sources about the health and lifestyle of the population of Wales into a simple, electronic-based service.

## what will my day be like?



### Nurse Adviser, Nicola

As a G grade nurse advisor each shift varies depending on whether I've been rostered to shift lead or triage calls. At the start of my shift I receive an update report on any issues affecting the service that day. This includes the latest health alerts, IT issues and any training/clinical developments. If I'm triaging calls I then need to ensure my working area or 'pod' has all that I need for that shift e.g. stationary and reference books. Telephony equipment also needs to be checked before I log on and take calls.

Call handlers take demographic details and prioritise the call before passing it over to me. I triage the call using a clinical support software called CAS, a tool that helps me to assess the caller's symptoms and give the best advice. We receive a wide variety of calls every day and my knowledge base broadens in direct response to the amount of research I need to undertake to answer the queries. During my shift there are opportunities to attend meetings and become involved with issues relating to risk management, audit, performance management and clinical resource groups. This gives me a chance to develop my skills and build on previous experience.

At the end of the shift a debrief session allows me to discuss any issues surrounding calls I've taken that day.

If I'm in a shift lead role it is my responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the call center. After receiving a handover from the previous shift lead I undertake routine duties such as allocation of meal breaks to staff. During the shift I liaise with the operational SNA regarding queue management and any clinical or operational issues that arise. I provide advice and support to nurse advisors, health information staff and call handlers. I also supervise/line manage F grade nurse advisors regarding call reviews and professional development. At the end of the shift I handover a report to the next shift lead ensuring they are aware of any changes affecting the service.

The role of the nurse advisor is varied and interesting with opportunities for personal development and promotion within the service.

### Call Handler, Jayne

5.45am - Alarm goes off. Without opening my eyes I hit snooze and snuggle back down.

5.50am - Alarm goes off for the second time. Once again it's snooze time.

5.55am - Alarm AGAIN! I have to get up this time because my husband has started to tut!

6.15am - I'm having THREE weetabix today. Well, it is Sunday and we're likely to be busy, what with the GP surgeries, pharmacies and dentists doing the civilised thing and staying in bed!

6.50am - Arrive in the call centre ready for my briefing about any issues or incidents overnight.

9.10am - Crikey what a busy couple of hours I've had, the world and his wife want health advice this morning. I'm off to the staff room for a 10-minute screen break and a cup of tea.

9.20am - Before plugging in I have a look at next month's rota. There are a few shifts I want off, so I 'red request' them. I still can't believe I'm able to choose certain shifts a week that I don't want changed. My last employer didn't offer that choice!

9.30am - Here we go! It's a 999 call and I need the Shift Lead nurse to help me. He's there by my side straightaway and supports me through the call. I haven't taken too many 999s yet and they still make me nervous. Afterwards the Shift Lead tells me that I handled it really well. I feel great.

12.20pm -The last couple of hours have been quiet so I've been keeping up to date by looking up some policies. It can be all or nothing in this job, but it's never predictable. That's what keeps me motivated. I'm off for lunch now.

2.40pm - It's been steady this afternoon, lots of Dental calls but a few urgent ones too. I always feel great when I reassure a frantic mother whose kiddy is ill and can hear the relief in her voice when I tell her I'm putting her through to a nurse for advice.

2.45pm - I log off now and go to the Shift Lead for a de brief.

3.10pm - Arrive home, safe and sound...ready for my Sunday roast!



## what will my day be like?

### Health Information Adviser, Mandy

Today I am working the 8 till 4 shift so I arrive at the centre in plenty of time for the 'hand over information' session delivered by the Senior Nurse Advisor managing the shift. I'm informed that there are no issues likely to affect the service today so I log into my PC and check any emails that relate to the Health Information (HI) team. Today these include a reminder for me to attend an HI team meeting at 2pm, and information relating to a new dental practice accepting NHS patients.



I'm ready to take my first call - from a mother requesting a call back for information relating to a common medical condition her child has been diagnosed with. I research information by checking our extensive library and find a leaflet containing comprehensive, up to date information that will meet the caller's exact requirements. I then phone the caller, relay the information, offer to post the leaflet and after checking that there is nothing else I can help with, invite her to call back for any further advice regarding this or any other health related matter. The morning proves to be extremely busy as the demand for the provision of health information is ever increasing - Monday to Friday, 40% of calls received by NHS Direct Wales relate to health information. I deal with a number of calls ranging from dental provision, how to register with a GP, the vaccinations needed to travel abroad and information relating to specific medical conditions.

After lunch I attend the monthly HI team meeting. These meetings are extremely productive as all members of staff are encouraged to discuss any work related matter. It is also a great opportunity for the HI manager to cascade information and to discuss development.

Returning from the meeting, I'm asked by the HI Coordinator to provide support to a new member of the team researching an especially complex call. We discuss the call and proceed to research using a range of information resources including medical /non-medical databases, reference books, our intranet, accredited websites and the leaflets/booklets in our library. With calls of this type, excellent research skills are required in order to extract the relevant information to meet the caller's requirements. Even though the call can take a longer period of time to resolve, it is extremely rewarding to reach a satisfactory outcome. I then enter details of the call into my professional portfolio - a comprehensive record of my continuing professional development.

At 3:45 pm I log out of the system and attend a 'debriefing' session held at the end of every shift to give staff the opportunity to discuss any matters relating to the shift. The session finishes at 4pm and I leave for home after another busy and yet fulfilling day.



### What did you do today?

A day in the life of NHS Direct Wales

I listened, I talked, I heard, I thought, I researched, I discussed, I didn't judge, I supported, I discussed, I delivered, I responded, I empowered, I collaborated, I was honest, I consulted, I informed, I reflected, I laughed, I cried, I communicated...

And that was all one call.

So what did you do?

## how is NHS Direct Wales developing?

### GP Out-of-Hours Services

NHS Direct Wales has become greatly involved in the provision of OOH's care since the change to GMS contracts came into force in October 04. The service currently provides call handling and nurse triage to callers accessing the Swansea LHB area and the Gwynedd and Anglesey area. The Gwynedd & Anglesey OOH service will absorb the area previously covered by the highly successful partnership with Meddygon Menai Doctors GP Co-op. Partnerships like these are acknowledged to be a successful means of streamlining access, providing safe and consistent advice to callers while reducing the workload of the GPs involved during the OOH period.

### A & E Integrations

NHS Direct Wales is seeking to expand its successful A&E integration programme. This integration means that callers to the department, seeking advice on new clinical conditions are transferred to NHS Direct Wales where they receive nurse triage and advice. After successfully developing partnerships with Morriston A&E department, the Royal Gwent Hospital and Singleton A&E, the team are looking at future partnerships with other trusts interested the development.

### The Samaritans

NHS Direct Wales, in collaboration with the Samaritans joint working initiative, agreed to pilot a scheme which would enable NHS Direct Wales to make referrals (only with the callers permission) to a Samaritan branch where volunteers would call the individuals at an agreed time and offer emotional support through the Samaritans normal follow up scheme.

This referral is in addition to triage outcomes, the provision of Health Information material and/or help lines and support groups. This link and partnership with the Samaritans is seen as an additional source of help and support for our callers.

### Category C

NHS Direct Wales has been working in partnership with ambulance colleagues in Wales to ease the amount of pressure the Emergency Ambulance Service is under, particularly in relation to 999 requests and response times.



Research has shown that not all 999 calls are life threatening, some require little or no treatment. If callers are able to obtain a health assessment, advice and reassurance, they can be referred on to more appropriate agencies or given self-care advice. NHS Direct Wales is ideally placed to assess and assist this type of caller.

The "Category C" project is a collaborative study between Sheffield and Swansea Universities and the Welsh Ambulance Services. The aim of the study is to assess if the transfer of 'Cat C' (low priority 999 calls) to NHS Direct Wales is clinically safe and appropriate.

## what opportunities will I have?

At NHS Direct Wales we take your training and development seriously.

Not only do we make sure that all our staff are equipped to provide an outstanding service every day by delivering a comprehensive induction programme, but we make sure that this commitment is ongoing with 10 days of dedicated down-time training.

We always ask the question "how will this help?" to make sure all our training packages support your professional development and continued growth within an organisation that benefits from your increased knowledge and awareness.

NHS Direct Wales is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all staff.

By developing the competencies needed for each role, staff are not only able to do their job better, but they also develop and grow as people. This is then cemented by regular appraisals to help identify individuals' needs over and above their roles.

We have developed a dedicated, fully equipped training suite at our centre in Swansea and provide all staff with access to internet and email to facilitate communication and support evidence based practice and training.

We work closely with a number of education providers and are constantly looking at ways of delivering training in different ways. As there are over 40 different ways of learning, we are always keen to develop one that suits you.



## why should I choose NHS Direct Wales?

There's never been a better time to work in the NHS. As part of a 1.3million strong team, you will be joining the largest employer in Europe and the third largest in the world. With access to direct monetary benefits, as well as many indirect benefits, you will find that NHS Direct Wales is able to offer you an extremely attractive package.

### Flexible Working

NHS Direct Wales is a 24 hr service and, as such, requires all front line staff to work around the service needs. This allows us to offer our staff a high degree of flexibility in shifts, with all full time staff having 3 out of 5 shift requests guaranteed. For non-front line staff, the organisation aims to make sure that, outside of the core business hours, you are able to work around your personal needs.

For front-line members of staff, we find it difficult to consider applications for staff looking to work less than 3 days/shifts a week. NHS Direct Wales is a very different way of working for many and there is a need for much participation in training and development schemes to ensure competency.

### The NHS Pension Scheme

The NHS offers a contributory pension scheme, calculated to be worth 20% of your annual salary. It remains available for all staff in a time when many other organisations have ceased to offer such schemes. The benefits include an inflation proof pension, a flexible retirement age, life assurance, family benefits and much more. For more information, go to [www.nhs.gov.uk](http://www.nhs.gov.uk).

### Making life cheaper!

We are constantly looking to update and increase the number of discounts that our staff are able to access. A key part of this is the [www.nhsdiscounts.com](http://www.nhsdiscounts.com) website which could save you money on many services and goods. It lists suppliers who recognise the value of NHS staff by offering discounts on holidays, communications and financial products and health and beauty items to name a few. Registration to the site is free for NHS employees.

### Pay and conditions

The NHS is currently modernising its pay and conditions with integrated partnership working with the Trade Unions. All jobs in the NHS are being evaluated to ensure consistency and fairness for staff. This will mean that all staff will have the same terms and conditions, including 27 days holiday, plus 8 bank holidays (pro-rata for part-time staff). For more information, go to [www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk).

### Help with Childcare

In addition to offering flexible working, we try to support parents who need help with their childcare. We have nurseries on, or near, all our sites and we looking at ways of discounting the costs of these for staff.

### In the Workplace

We provide a comfortable and professional working environment. With purpose built offices at two of our centres we provide an air-conditioned contact centre with a high level of security. Work stations are spacious and well designed for maximum comfort including adjustable, ergonomically designed seating together with high specification equipment such as keyboards, PCs and Headsets.

## what are the organisation's values?

From the outset, NHS Direct Wales has valued diversity. This has led to the creation of truly mixed teams capable of sharing their skills and learning from each other's experience. In NHS Direct Wales you will find Midwives and Paediatric specialists working alongside staff from a range of clinical specialties including A&E, Mental Health, Community Nursing and Intensive Care. Increasing flexibility, encouraging part-time working and building work patterns around service demand ensures the investment the NHS makes in its nurses throughout their careers is not wasted.

We aim to be an employer of choice - as we want the best staff to work for us, we give our staff the best of everything. Central to this is equality and diversity; we only employ the best staff, whatever their race, gender, age, disability status, or religion.

NHS Direct Wales is working in partnership with a number of government and non-profit organisations to help us become a strong and diverse employer. We work closely with Remploy to support the recruitment of disabled candidates and those with health conditions. Remploy offer pre-employment services including confidential and independent advice, training and guidance and help with the interview process. Further, they assist NHS Direct Wales staff who need help due to issues of ill health.

The Health & Safety at Work Act ensures NHS Direct Wales provides a safe working environment for all staff. Staff have an important role in acting responsibly while annual manual handling, fire safety and resuscitation training is mandatory. Regular DSE assessments are carried out to protect the health of all staff.

NHS Direct Wales actively promotes a no-smoking policy for the benefit of staff health. Smokers are welcome to apply for posts and their applications will be treated on the same basis as those of non-smokers.

NHS Direct Wales is a fair and reasonable employer and is committed of promoting good and open employee relationships. We are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of quality, openness and accountability in all our practices.



## contact us

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All of the information held within this pack is correct at time of going to press.

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