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Delivering urgent capacity in Wales

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In collaboration, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and Vanguard Healthcare Solutions installed facilities, referred to as a 'mini-hospital' by Health Board staff, in record time – just six weeks for a dual-procedure endoscopy complex and nine weeks for a four-theatre, two-ward surgical suite.



A critical incident was declared at Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend when an inspection revealed issues with large areas of the hospital's roof, and the entire first floor was evacuated. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM UHB) was forced to close facilities,

including six theatres, seriously impacting capacity for orthopaedics and endoscopy.

Gethin Hughes, Chief Operating Officer, CTM UHB, commented, "It was in the region of about a third of our physical capacity that was lost. While the roof replacement programme was

being completed, we needed to replace the lost capacity, to allow us to address our waiting times and treat patients facing delays because of the ongoing incident."

Concerned about the likelihood of patient waiting times increasing, CTM optimised internal capacity, moving specialties around the Health Board's sites, but was left far short of the required capacity.

As Rhys Hopkins, Senior Nurse, Theatres and Pre-Assessment, CTM UHB, explained, "The care group threw everything at it and looked at all available options for us in the private sector and with our colleagues in neighbouring health boards. In looking for that additional space and capacity, many areas were scoped out.

"We focused our efforts on supporting our colleagues within the health board and then we were made aware that we were planning for the Vanguard theatres to be implemented at Royal Glamorgan. That was something that we were really excited to get our teeth into and start planning that project."

Quickly building a collaborative working relationship with the chosen supplier would be key, as would the supplier's ability to work within tight time, budget and space constraints.

CTM opted to work with Vanguard partly because of their unique capability to integrate relocatable (or mobile) and modular-built facilities. No alternative could match the time within which the relocatables could provide high-quality surgical and clinical environments. Modular construction enables design flexibility and quick installation of wards and support areas, integrated seamlessly with the relocatables.

With every passing day, patients were seeing their vital diagnostic or surgical appointments postponed, adding pressure on CTM and



Mobile facilities

1 - 4 Operating theatres

8 - 9 Endoscopy Complex: Treatment rooms, integrated with five-bay ward and endoscope sterilisation facilities.

Modular facilities

5 Six-bay recovery area, two consultancy rooms, a waiting/reception area, dirty utility, clean utility/storage, two changing rooms, and two accessible toilets.

6 Eight-bay recovery area, dirty utility, clean utility, toilet and accessible toilet.

7 Consultation room, staff changing rooms, staff welfare room, accessible toilet and two storage rooms.

10 Main hospital buildings

The facilities were positioned in a restricted courtyard space.

Vanguard to provide alternative facilities quickly. The Health Board's sites were assessed as to their suitability to house additional, temporary facilities. Quickly, a plan was developed to install four surgical theatres, two wards and an endoscopy complex at Royal Glamorgan Hospital. The chosen location was close to the main entrance of the hospital, but the fact that it was closely confined on three sides, by the main hospital buildings, presented some challenges. "We had to work out the most effective shape to get the four theatres in. It is an exceptionally snug space and we've had to work really flexibly with Vanguard and our partners in shared services, in relation to the building regulations, recognising it's in a courtyard space."

While Vanguard went about installing the replacement capacity, the Health Board staff did all they could to minimise disruption for patients, especially those requiring the most urgent attention. Gethin explains, "Our teams have been fantastically flexible."

"We've got teams working in evenings and at weekends using our existing estate, but that only reduces the demand by a small proportion. We've prioritised the urgent clinical cases to make sure that those patients on suspected cancer pathways have been the priority through endoscopy, so that we can continue to make sure that those patients at greatest risk are being managed as effectively as we can."

Vanguard first installed the standalone Endoscopy Complex. Delivered by two HGVs, positioned, extended and seamlessly joined, this facility provides two treatment rooms, a five-bed ward and scope processing.

Touring the facility, a couple of days before the first patient visited, Consultant



Modular and mobile facilities were integrated seamlessly

Gastroenterologist, Dr. Thomas Yapp spoke about how beneficial it would be to reunite the Princess of Wales team, which had been scattered around the Health Board's sites. "Being back together will allow us to resume our service in full, providing a first-class endoscopy service in a first-class endoscopy environment."

Four relocatable or mobile theatres were delivered for the surgical suite. These unique, versatile facilities are ideal when high-quality theatre capacity is required with minimum delay and have been used for almost every type of procedure, including orthopaedics, ophthalmics and open-heart surgery. Modular construction was used to add two wards, one six-bay and one eight-bay, plus support rooms including a reception and waiting area, multiple consulting rooms and offices, clean and dirty utility rooms for each ward, four staff changing rooms, storage rooms and a staff welfare room.

As expected, the close, collaborative working relationship between the Health Board and Vanguard was vital to the quick, successful installation. Dr. Dom Hurford, Executive Medical Director, CTM, and Consultant Anaesthetist, Royal Glamorgan Hospital, commented, "It got to the stage where we weren't quite sure who was a Vanguard employee and who was a CTM employee because everyone was working together. People were challenging each other the right way, coming up with suggestions that could have come from either side of the table, working as one team, rather than 'us and them'. I think that made all the difference."

While Vanguard was completing the groundwork, commissioning the relocatable theatres and simultaneously constructing the modular sections at their factory in Hull, Health Board staff were also busy, making the installation process as smooth as possible and ensuring everything was prepared to enable full patient services as early as possible.

As Sarah Edwards, Directorate Manager - Anaesthetics, Critical Care, Theatres and Orthopaedics, CTM UHB, says, "The speed and the rapid response is nothing less than phenomenal. We were told in January that these four theatres were going to be landing on the Royal Glamorgan site and within 48 hours, we set up a task and finish group, which was multidisciplinary, involving a number of services and specialties, ranging from the capital team, right through to facilities, the therapies, radiology, health and safety, admission and discharge, and ward support."

"It is exceptional for the infrastructure to be embedded, constructed, fully equipped, and have all the equipment moved from one site to another, which was a task in itself. This equipment is not easy to transport. To get our waiting list management and all our IT systems aligned to a new set of theatres and the lifting ►



The eight-bay modular ward

Cover story

and shifting of a whole workforce in nine weeks has been a real achievement. Nine weeks from start to finish, and opening up what I can only call a micro version of a hospital, is absolutely phenomenal."

Without the use of off-site construction methods, those timescales would not have been possible. Vanguard's relocatable theatres and endoscopy complex enable the delivery and commissioning of surgical and clinical environments within weeks.

Building the modules in the factory while simultaneously completing groundwork meant that the project was completed much more quickly than if traditional methods had been used. The chances of weather-related delays are greatly reduced and quality control is more effective in a factory environment. Quicker installation brought forward the benefits to patients and staff and minimised any disruption to the everyday activity at the hospital.

The quick delivery would only have been worthwhile if the end results met the needs of the Health Board, staff and patients. Sarah commented, "Within 12 working days of the surgical suite being open, we've seen over 150 patients. The scope of activity that we have going through there is way above and beyond what we originally expected.

"That's due to the support of the radiology, the radiation team, sterile services. The scope is very wide, so we are now putting through general surgery, gynaecology, orthopaedics, max-facs, pain, ENT... Probably all our services are going through it with some procedures and treatments."

Feedback from staff and patients has been very positive. Pre-conceived ideas about a Vanguard operating theatre sometimes include that they are smaller than the ideal environment.

As Sarah explains, "Naturally, there were some reservations because none of the staff had worked in a Vanguard unit before. They had preconceptions that they were going to be working in a tight space and that they wouldn't have the luxuries that they have in a normal theatre. But that's turned around completely.

"They absolutely love working in them. They said that they're bigger than expected and they have ample room for storage. The admission and the discharge pathway is full of dignity. The theatres are adequate, and you've got the additional first recovery stage. The team are absolutely thrilled and want to work in the Vanguards."

Speaking about the surgical complex, Sarah Edwards expresses a similar sentiment to that of Dr. Yapp at the opening of the endoscopy complex, "When we were informed of the critical incident, we had to optimise by placing staff in other areas, covering any gaps we had in any



One of the four mobile theatres

rotas or transferring staff over to other sites, to be considered as supernumerary or to be assistants in the theatres. The staff lost a little bit of identity and ownership. Nevertheless, we were in a critical incident and that is what we had to do. However, now that they've got the Vanguards, they're back to their cohesive working and back to their teamwork. They are now operating as per their job plans and running as per their shift, so their morale has been boosted tremendously."

Patients also appreciate the new environment. Sarah commented, "We've had tremendous feedback from the patients. I was actually on site when our first five patients came in. And the first impression was that they felt they were in a five-star hotel." Rhys Hopkins, concurred, "The initial feedback from patients has been brilliant. We've managed it via QR codes and telephone calls, pre- and post-operatively, and patients have been really complementary."

Building this facility, to a design and standard that meets the needs of the Health Board, linking it to the rest of the Royal Glamorgan estate, equipping it, establishing new procedures and introducing staff to their new environment was a considerable achievement, especially when considering the high-quality of the facility, and taking into account the urgency of the situation and the tight space within which the facility was created. The reactions of staff and patients are additional reasons for the Health Board to take pride in their response, which ensured that a critical incident didn't become a crisis.

The real measure of success is the improvement in patients' lives, months earlier than would otherwise have been possible. Dom Hurford explains, "The longer patients have to wait, the sicker they get. Therefore, the operation and recovery become more complicated. Ultimately, their care is affected;

hence, we had to do something at speed."

During the ten weeks that the surgical hub was providing replacement capacity for the Princess of Wales Hospital, across seven different specialties, over 1,000 patients received life-changing surgery. Meanwhile, in twelve weeks, at thirty JAG points per day, the endoscopy facility enabled 1,500 patients to progress along their treatment pathway.

Maximising the benefit provided by the Vanguard 'mini-hospital', it will now be used as additional rather than alternative capacity, with staff and patients of the Royal Glamorgan Hospital replacing those of the Princess of Wales and working to reduce waiting lists. Other NHS Wales Health Boards will also utilise the facility to reduce the waiting times of their patients.

The impact of this facility on patients is summed-up by Dr. Dom Hurford, Executive Medical Director at Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB and Consultant Anaesthetist at Royal Glamorgan Hospital, "Talking to the patients, I don't think they see a difference. To them, it doesn't matter whether they've gone upstairs to the theatre or come out to this complex.

"They've had their operation in a facility that was built in under ten weeks, but to them, they've come to the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, they've had their operation, and they've gone home. Job done!"



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