

Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic: **Employer Innovation and Best Practice**

September 2021



1. Introduction

This report focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce in Wales and how employers have responded to the demands of the pandemic. This includes a series of case studies demonstrating how Healthy Working Wales (HWW) award holders have embedded new ways of working to best support their workforce.

These employers have highlighted how valuable their previous engagement with the HWW programme has been in having established strong health and wellbeing foundations on which to build. HWW will continue to play a vital role in supporting employers to promote, protect and enhance their employees' wellbeing in a post-pandemic world. This includes tailoring approaches to sectors and size of organisations, and equipping employers with the skills, knowledge and resources to understand and best support the wellbeing needs of their workforce.

Many employers have shown resilience by taking innovative action to respond to the pandemic and flexing to best support their workforce. This demonstrates that, with the right guidance and support, employers can emerge from the pandemic having embedded new ways of working that promote health and wellbeing, making them better able to deal with future challenges.



2. Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on both workplaces and the workforce in Wales and across the UK.

A Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) survey undertaken between March and June 2020¹ highlighted the wide range of health and wellbeing concerns of employees as a result of the pandemic beyond the risks of exposure to the Covid-19 virus from attending their workplace. The top two most commonly reported concerns were fear and anxiety about themselves or loved ones becoming ill and the negative impact of isolation and loneliness on their mental wellbeing.

A Public Health Wales (PHW) Health Impact Assessment in 2020² reported major negative short to long term impacts on mental wellbeing particularly for children and young people, older people, key workers, those on low incomes and at risk of unemployment and those who have existing poor mental health.

The impact of being under restrictive measures were reported as symptoms such as stress, confusion and anger. Stressors included longer quarantine duration (greater than 10 days), infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss and stigma. There is the potential for longer lasting effects from these stressors.

Employer research undertaken by HWW/ PHW between March and May 2021³ identified the extent to which employers are more concerned than ever about their employees' health and wellbeing and their role in supporting and managing this.



¹ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/goodwork/covid-impact#gref>

² <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu/hia-reports/>

³ In draft – to be published on <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/healthy-working-wales/>



73% of employers
stated poor mental
health and wellbeing
had become a bigger
issue for employees

Employees' mental health was already signalled as an important issue for employers in research HWW conducted prior to the pandemic but this more recent research demonstrates significantly heightened concerns with 73% of employers stating poor mental health and wellbeing had become a bigger issue for employees. Specific issues highlighted by employers included anxiety, stress and depression exacerbated by pandemic measures, balancing work with caring responsibilities, loneliness and isolation.

Employers also expressed concern about a perceived increase in physical health issues among their staff, particularly musculoskeletal disorders, and an increase in unhealthy behaviours such as alcohol consumption, a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits leading to weight gain. All of these are risk factors for chronic health conditions developing over time.

We also asked employers about mechanisms in place to support a healthy work environment in Spring 2021 compared to March 2020 just before the reality of the pandemic kicked in, with responses indicating a greater focus on and increase in the following:

- Flexible working policies
- Access to information for employees
- External support services
- Health and wellbeing policies and events
- Designated health and wellbeing roles
- Peer support such as buddying or advocate schemes.

Many employers highlighted their lack of confidence and skills in managing sickness absence well and their need for supporting mechanisms and tools to do this better. However, provision of support for employees on longer term sickness absence was much higher than findings from previous HWW research with employers:

- In 2019 40% of employers reported having no support available compared to only 4% in 2021.
- There was a marked increase in occupational health and employee assistance programme provision as well as sickness absence policies and adapted working conditions to meet the needs of employees returning from sickness absence.

In relation to the pros and cons of remote/home working, employers identified the biggest challenges as:



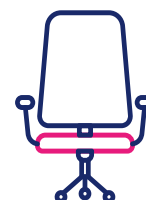
59%

Jobs unsuitable for
homeworking



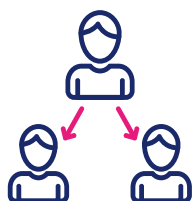
52%

Reduced mental
wellbeing



45%

Ergonomic
challenges



45%

Lower staff collaboration/
co-operation



44%

Difficulties with
technology

Employers identified the greatest benefits as:



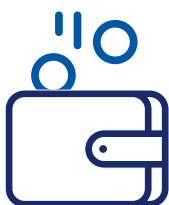
65%

Better work-life balance
generally



70%

Better work-life balance
due to less commuting



66%

Saving money such
as travel costs



66%

More flexibility to fulfil
caring responsibilities

The World Health Organization⁴ has identified the economic impacts of Covid-19 as including: rising unemployment, firm closures, an increase in poverty risk and working poor, and widening economic and health gaps between geographical areas. There are significant challenges ahead for Welsh employers with the majority of business sectors having been hit by the pandemic, although some harder than others, and a particular concern for small and micro

businesses which may be less resilient to any ongoing reduction in consumer demands.

Employers will play an instrumental role in both supporting the recovery of the economy and improving the health of the working age population in Wales, particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

⁴ World Health Organization (2020) Strengthening and adjusting public health measures throughout the COVID-19 transition phases [Online]. Available at: https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/440037/Strength-AdjustingMeasures- COVID19-transition-phases.pdf

3. Healthy Working Wales

The HWW programme has been supporting employers in Wales since 2003. The programme uses an evidenced based approach to work with employers to implement initiatives in the workplace to support, enhance and promote the health and wellbeing of the Welsh workforce.

Over the years, HWW has supported employers to achieve one of Welsh Government's workplace health awards (the Corporate Health Standard for employers with more than 50 employees and the Small Workplace Health Award for smaller employers). Progressing towards and achieving an award provides employers with a set of criteria to work towards at each award level. HWW Advisors work closely with employers providing advice, tools and resources together with training and workshops.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, HWW has turned its attention to providing employers with information and resources to protect the health and safety of their staff and enable a safe return to work in line with Welsh Government guidance.

The HWW website provides a one-stop shop of Covid-19 guidance and tools for employers and has experienced a significant and sustained increase in views during the pandemic period. The monthly HWW e-bulletin highlights new guidance, resources and initiatives. We worked with the PHW National Covid-19 Contact

Centre to ensure access to the most up-to-date information for dealing with employer queries and developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document responding to the most common queries.

Employers who are HWW award holders have taken a wide range of innovative approaches in supporting their employees and clients during the pandemic. Their feedback has highlighted how being engaged with HWW has enabled them to adapt to the pandemic through having strong health and wellbeing foundations already embedded in their workplaces, which they have built upon to better support their workforce during the challenges presented by the pandemic. The pandemic has had a significant impact on mental wellbeing but HWW employers have reported that having policies, procedures and referral mechanisms in place as part of the awards framework has better equipped them to respond to the increasing demand for support from their workforce.



4. Employer Innovation and Best Practice

We gathered information from some of our HWW award holding employers on initiatives they have implemented over the course of the pandemic to support and protect their workforces.

We have sought to capture the challenges employers have faced and how they have adapted quickly to embed new ways of working. We are keen to recognise employers' efforts and their commitment to their staff as well as share the lessons learnt with other employers and use the learning and approaches to inform our future work with employers.

Another aim of this report is to document for future reference the types of changes that many, if not most, employers across the country made to meet the demands of the pandemic – it is clear many processes and practices have changed in a positive way, and many of these are likely to be permanent changes.

The rest of the document sets out:

- **A high level summary of the types of changes to policies and practices that employers have made in the following categories:**



Introducing safe working



Employee health and wellbeing



Promotion of mental wellbeing



Remote working



Flexible working



Communication channels



Giving back

- **Highlights from HWW employer case studies including the key lessons learnt**

Summary of Changes to Employer Policies and Practices

Introducing Safe Working

Examples include:

- One way systems
- Reprogramming doors to only open from one side
- Restructuring work spaces
- Removing equipment to ensure adherence to physical distancing and facilitate cleaning
- Hygiene practices including access to handwashing facilities and hand sanitiser
- Systems to limit number of staff accessing smaller spaces e.g. meeting rooms, kitchens and toilet blocks
- Staggering start and finish times and break times
- Training Covid-19 Champions to oversee safety practices

Employee health and wellbeing

Examples include:

- Campaigns to support and promote wellbeing
- Surveys to explore areas of need
- Enhanced Covid-19 risk assessments
- Virtual fitness or relaxation classes
- Webinars on topics such as resilience and keeping well remotely
- Exercise challenges
- Virtual book clubs and company quizzes

Promotion of mental wellbeing

Examples include:

- Free referrals for mental health support
- Mental Health Allies within the workplace offering confidential support
- Resource libraries with self-help guides, online resources plus mindfulness recordings
- Training for line managers and other staff to increase confidence in identifying and supporting mental health issues



Remote working

Examples include:

- Individual assessments of staff needs and appropriateness of working from home
- Remote working risk assessments
- Provision of equipment to ensure safe working practices
- 'Desk stretch' videos
- Daily virtual staff meetings to foster engagement, clarify daily expectations and help staff feel less isolated

Communication channels

Examples include:

- Staff information page specifically for Covid-19 and FAQs
- Screensaver updates on latest guidance
- Regular phone calls to individual staff to supplement daily staff meetings
- Weekly video briefings and messages via intranet and staff social media channels

Giving back

Examples include:

- Supporting staff to undertake public duties to take the pressure off the local authority such as cutting hedges and grass
- Enhanced payments and bonuses as recognition of hard work and commitment during the pandemic
- Care packages to employees working at home and food deliveries to work sites

Highlights from Case Studies:

How HWW employers have embedded new ways of working to best support their workforces

The full employer case studies are available on the HWW website:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/healthy-working-wales/>



Supporting staff to
undertake public duties

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service Wales

HWW Gold Corporate Health Standard

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales. HMCTS is an executive agency, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice.

We work with an independent judiciary to provide a fair, efficient and effective justice system. We administer the work of magistrates' courts and the County Court, Family Court, Crown Court and Royal Courts of Justice.

We operate from locations in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and employ around 17,000 staff (830 in Wales).

Highlights

- When the pandemic hit we set out to create an inclusive environment for work whether at home or on site.
- Key to the health and wellbeing of staff during the pandemic has been how to connect and support staff whether working at home or on site. This involved the creation of the HMCTS 'Together whilst apart' newsletter which was a new communication channel for home workers focusing on addressing isolation and sharing useful information.
- Webinars have been held using both professional content and volunteers from across the organisation sharing their experiences. Topics have included resilience and isolation, keeping well remotely, mindfulness, and grief and loss.
- Our Mental Health Allies offered their services virtually or face to face, providing confidential support to individuals, raising awareness of mental health issues and acting as a vital source of information for all.
- Staff have continued to feel engaged, supported and valued by the initiatives put in place to look after them during these difficult times.
- Being part of the Healthy Working Wales programme enabled us to act with confidence and to build on our already structured employee wellbeing framework.



Our Mental Health Allies
provide confidential support
and act as a vital source of
information

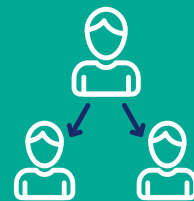
Hywel Dda University Health Board

HWW Platinum Corporate Health Standard Award

Hywel Dda University Health Board (H DUHB) provides healthcare services to a population of around 384,000 throughout Carmarthenshire (183,936), Ceredigion (79,488) and Pembrokeshire (120,576).

It provides acute, primary, community, mental health and learning disabilities services via general and community hospitals, health centres, GPs, dentists, pharmacists and optometrists.

The organisation employs 10,282 members of staff comprising of clinical and medical staff and admin, clerical and ancillary grades.



**Checking in with staff
and treating everyone as an
individual is important**

Highlights

- The Healthy Working Wales Corporate Health Standard principles have continued to be valuable and are still being followed during the pandemic and with the associated new ways of working.
- We researched the best ways of achieving new ways of working such as different platforms for the delivery of different learning programmes, piloted within our Organisational Development team and then evaluated prior to any further roll out.
- The importance of checking in with staff and treating everyone as an individual is emphasised, providing the opportunity to take time out and talk whilst ensuring compassion and empathy for individual needs.
- Being forced to move to remote and online working has proved that roles can be undertaken virtually and not everyone has to be in the office all the time to get their job done.
- Covid-19 has certainly changed people's way of thinking - for some positivity and productivity have increased due to the new work-life balance which has been forced into place.
- The wellbeing of staff is our highest priority and working towards Healthy Working Wales awards has enhanced the health and wellbeing of our staff. The involvement of a wide range of teams and staff in the HWW process has ensured embedding health and wellbeing into corporate life and culture is at a very advanced stage.



Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

HWW Bronze Small Workplace Health Award

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBCW) is an independent Welsh Government sponsored body with the main purpose of publishing a programme of work which keeps under review the electoral arrangements for the 22 principal councils.

A team of 11 based in Cardiff make electoral review recommendations which are in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

Highlights

- We set out to ensure we had an understanding of all our staff needs, acknowledging staff would have different requirements and a one-size-fits-all solution was not going to be the best approach.
- Full risk assessments are regularly carried out to identify staff needs. The Commission works with and around staff to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing needs are catered for.
- Staff are able to log on and off as and when they wish as long as their work is completed. 1-2-1 and staff meetings are now held via Skype and Teams whilst a WhatsApp group has been set up which everyone can contribute to and chat with each other.
- We have continued with our stretching classes virtually with the trainer who used to carry this class out in person in the office. This gives staff the opportunity to take time away from their computer and responsibilities to have some 'me time' to help with any pressures they may be feeling.
- We have seen the benefits of remote and flexible working practices on enhanced communication, reduced travel, making savings in both time and money and ultimately in some cases leading to increased productivity.
- The LDBCW acknowledges that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in increased stress and anxiety for many people and the restrictions imposed has led to increased isolation for some. As a result, we undertake surveys with staff to establish areas of need and we support staff and explore what changes or improvements can be made.
- On the journey so far with Healthy Working Wales the LDBCW has been supported to feel confident and able to implement health and wellbeing initiatives with our workforce.

North Wales Fire & Rescue Service

HWW Platinum Corporate Health Standard Award

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) helps to protect an estimated population of 678,461 people over an area of 2,400 square miles as well as hundreds of thousands of tourists and visitors who come to North Wales every year.

There are around 317,051 domestic properties and 24,484 non-domestic properties in North Wales that fall under our protection. The Service employs almost 1,000 staff in operational and support roles.

Annually we attend around 3,200 fires, 500 road traffic collisions and 500 other emergency incidents. We also attend around 3,600 false alarms of various kinds every year. We carry out extensive work with schools, businesses and local communities to promote fire safety and prevention.

Highlights

- As a Healthy Working Wales Gold and Platinum Corporate Health Award holder, we are proud of our achievements and ongoing pledge to support the health and wellbeing of employees.
- We set up a transition cell to achieve a systems change in ways of working while continuing to respond to the urgent challenges of the pandemic.
- Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group, and its associated policies, evidence a demonstrable set of health and wellbeing principles, providing a strong foundation for delivering new ways of working.
- We moved to large-scale, agile working overnight then looked at whether arrangements could be made permanent and how the workplace could look and operate post-pandemic.
- A focus group of staff from different parts of the Service together with staff surveys are used to seek employee experiences and views on remote working to inform future practices.
- The Health and Fitness Team run 'Workout Wednesday' on the staff online platform to promote good physical and mental health - due to popular demand, this has been extended to include 'Fitness Friday' workouts with recordings available to anyone who misses the live session.
- Our surveys have shown employees have felt more motivated, more engaged and have described benefits in terms of work-life balance and increased levels of physical and mental wellbeing.

Principality Landscapers Ltd

HWW Gold Small Workplace Health Award

Principality Landscapers Ltd (PLL) is a small workplace employing around 48 staff most of the year but, as a seasonal business, this increases to around 58 in the summer.

PLL works with several large employers looking after their outside areas. Clients include the DVLA, Valero and Amazon as well as a number of local councils and housing associations.



Highlights

- Good communication and engagement has always been a priority for PLL, however throughout these uncertain times it has been seen as paramount and prioritised by management. Catch ups with staff are carried out on a weekly basis, however they can also be carried out daily when required by either staff or management.
- All employees are individually risk assessed based on their medical questionnaires and employee inspections records which are frequently undertaken.
- The Baglan depot has been split into sections with chains restricting people wandering into areas where they are not permitted such as office staff in the fitters' area. The office building windows and available doors are left open when possible to increase fresh air flow through the building.
- The company provides all teams, office staff and fitters with hand sanitiser, anti-bacterial hand wipes and hand wash, and hot water is available at the Baglan depot.
- Toolbox Talks covering all aspects of Covid-19 and the pandemic are delivered and regularly refreshed to include relevant health topics.
- The effects have been good for PLL as the organisation has created a full risk assessment process, streamlined work processes, identified patterns and trends in relation to sickness absence, and retained key staff.
- We have become more efficient in effectively communicating with staff whilst many processes have been streamlined for the better. We have grown as a company and are better prepared to deal with future challenges which may present themselves.
- Engagement with the Healthy Working Wales programme prior to the pandemic had increased our resilience as a company and embedded strong foundations for the continuing support and development of our staff and business.

Public Health Wales

HWW Gold Corporate Health Standard Award

Public Health Wales (PHW) employs approximately 1900 staff at 50 sites throughout Wales. PHW exists to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the Welsh population and to reduce inequalities in health with a vision to achieve a healthier, happier and fairer Wales. PHW is part of the NHS and reports to the Minister for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government. PHW works locally, nationally and, with partners, across communities.

Our role as the national public health agency of Wales means we have been at the forefront of managing the response to the pandemic and we had to respond quickly at the end of January 2020. It was recognised that teams from across the organisation were required to support the pandemic response. One month later, following the first positive case of Covid-19 in Wales, this support was rapidly scaled up and, with the exception of a few business critical departments, became the sole organisational priority.

Highlights

- As a lead organisation for the pandemic response in Wales we have had to adapt quickly whilst leading by example in providing a safe working environment for our staff.
- We rolled out a personal risk assessment tool to all staff to identify and respond to the needs of those more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19.
- Many staff have continued to come to the workplace to carry out the pandemic response so we rapidly implemented safe physical distancing and hygiene working practices.
- We have increased communications and engagement with staff, including seeking feedback through a staff survey, and done everything we can to ensure staff feel supported.
- The PHW 'How are you doing' campaign was launched to support the people of Wales, including our staff, and we also introduced 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' for staff.
- We have commissioned an independent assessment of our Covid-19 workplace preparedness to learn any lessons.
- Employee wellbeing practices embedded from being part of the Healthy Working Wales process gave us a firm grounding for responding to the needs of our employees during the pandemic.
- Our experience of responding to the pandemic has provided insights into what the workplace might look like in the future and allowed us to get ready for new ways of working.

The Wallich

HWW Silver Corporate Health Standard Award

As Wales's largest homelessness and rough sleeping charity, The Wallich operates under three core objectives: getting people off the streets; keeping people off the streets; and creating opportunities for people. The Wallich wants to create a Wales where people stand together to provide hope, support and solutions to end homelessness.

Running 70 diverse projects, across 18 local authorities, The Wallich works with more than 9,000 homeless and vulnerable people every year across Wales with the support of volunteers alongside more than 400 employees.

Highlights

- We have continued to deliver frontline services through a combination of face-to-face and online delivery.
- Safe areas and distancing has been marked in our premises, we have undertaken stringent risk assessments of all areas and cleaning procedures have been issued to all services.
- We issued working-from-home tools and accommodated flexible working hours for parents to undertake home schooling.
- During Carers Week, policies supporting individuals caring for family members and the PHW 'How Are You Doing' campaign were promoted.
- We provided access to wellbeing experts on a 1-2-1 and group basis and a comprehensive resource library to support mental wellbeing including advice, self-help guides and resources like podcasts and mindfulness videos.
- Initiatives to encourage physical fitness are promoted including walking challenges and workout videos.
- Achieving the HWW Silver Corporate Health Standard has meant that health and wellbeing was already embedded in the organisation and is at the forefront of everything we do.
- Our pandemic response has resulted in us becoming more resilient as an organisation, adapting to the needs of our client group whilst supporting the wellbeing and safety of our workforce.



Initiatives to encourage physical fitness are promoted including walking challenges and workout videos

Transport for Wales (Working towards) HWW Bronze Corporate Health Standard Award

Transport for Wales (TfW) employs around 350 staff and exists to drive forward the Welsh Government's vision of a high quality, safe, integrated, affordable and accessible transport network of which the people of Wales can be proud.



Our pandemic interventions have instigated a **positive cultural effect**

Highlights

- TfW responded swiftly to lockdown by closing our headquarters immediately and ensuring that communications to all staff were informative.
- Regular Covid-19 staff bulletins have been an essential companion providing updates on support, current guidance, helpful tips and sources of information.
- We have emphasised our commitment to ensure that 'nobody is left behind' by providing practical and emotional support for anyone who is struggling with the physical or psychological demands of lockdown and having to work from home.
- Recognising the need to ensure stability and provide a strategic response to changing circumstances, a Tactical Contingency Group was formed to provide leadership, planning and resources to maintain not only TfW's business integrity but proactive measures to keep our colleagues safe.
- There can be no doubt that the pandemic interventions have instigated a positive cultural effect: colleagues are looking out for each other; line managers are understanding the important role they have to play in their team members' mental health; and there has been a demonstrable commitment at a senior level to an organisational response which puts our people first.
- Being part of the Healthy Working Wales programme has given us an evidence based framework to structure our existing health and wellbeing initiatives. During the pandemic we have been able to utilise and develop existing support structures to meet the needs of our workforce.

Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd (WREC)

HWW Gold Small Workplace Health Award

Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting (WREC) is an education and social welfare organisation. Founded in 2012, we deliver a variety of high quality skills-related programmes and social services provision.

We have a team of 29 staff, supporting 1,352 individuals across our programmes in 2018/19 in South Wales, Dorset, Wiltshire and Sussex. Our existing clients include five local authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Education & Skills Funding Agency. WREC is an approved centre with City and Guilds, the Institute for Leadership and Management, Northern Council for Further Education and Agored Cymru.

Highlights

- We have been concerned for the health and wellbeing of our staff whilst working remotely and it has been imperative the company ensured good communication and engagement with all staff.
- Daily staff meetings at 9am help us all to be prepared for the day ahead as well as keeping communication levels up, creating a routine and helping everyone to stay focused and motivated. It also ensures staff feel less isolated.
- Staff are encouraged to move away from their desks throughout the day and undertake some form of exercise.
- Using virtual platforms has increased our workflow and streamlined some of our processes.
- It doesn't matter where staff are, if communication and engagement are top priority it can work. Staff feel supported, valued and have reported that communication channels have improved.
- Working with Healthy Working Wales has enabled us to make the connection between the importance of employee wellbeing and the benefits this can bring to the workplace.
- Having wellbeing policies and practices embedded into everything we do as a business has provided us with strong foundations which we were able to draw on to best support the workforce during these uncertain times.



**It doesn't matter
where staff are, if
communication and
engagement are top
priority it can work**

Wockhardt/CP Pharmaceuticals

HWW Silver Corporate Health Standard Award

Wockhardt/CP Pharmaceuticals has been based on the Wrexham Industrial Estate for over 60 years. Wockhardt manufacture sterile pharmaceuticals on site e.g. insulin, heparin and morphine. We also have a large laboratory department for testing of products, a research and development department and a distribution section.

We employ over 400 staff in Wrexham based at 2 sites on the industrial estate and supply to the NHS, pharmacies, supermarkets as well as a large export market. We are proud to have been manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine during the pandemic.

Highlights

- Our vision is based on the belief that people are the mainstay of the business and by investing in people we can be confident that the needs of our customers can be met.
- Classed as essential workers, we kept our sites open and operated in the safest possible manner by mobilising our business continuity plans and implementing a range of emergency measures.
- We implemented social distancing measures and a range of agile working including staggered start and finish times and staggered break times.
- We regularly rolled out information to all staff on and off site through a range of channels including via the intranet, emails, screensavers, with wage slips and visually on-site.
- Bi-weekly emails to staff working from home were sent from the Occupational Health team to 'check-in' and provide opportunities to raise welfare concerns confidentially.
- Staying in touch with staff who were shielding and those unable to work was imperative to ensure they did not feel forgotten and were updated on changes implemented whilst off.
- As a morale booster, all staff, whether working from home, on site or shielding, received a care box of goodies including hand sanitiser, tissues and chocolates.
- We linked with a company providing a free service called 'Let's keep Talking' for anyone who was struggling with anxiety or isolation.
- Building on existing measures put in place through achieving our Healthy Working Wales award, we developed new approaches to supporting mental health in the workplace including a stress policy, workforce awareness training and support to recognise and manage mental ill health and build resilience.
- During the pandemic staff have felt more involved and communication at all levels has improved.