

Tuesday 9 March 2021

Tribute paid to health and care workers after year like no other

Twelve months on from the very first local case of Covid-19, health and care leaders in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire have paid a heartfelt tribute to staff who went the extra mile during the pandemic.

Last March saw thousands of NHS workers across the region, along with their colleagues from local councils, voluntary groups and countless other key organisations, rise up to meet the challenge of coronavirus, with many embodying a war-time spirit of helping out wherever help was needed.

Now, almost a year to the day later, the actions of these courageous and determined frontline workers and those staff who've worked behind the scenes to support the emergency response are being publicly acknowledged.

Tracey Cox, Chief Executive, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "It is only right that, on the first anniversary of this heart-wrenching pandemic, we once again acknowledge and say thank you to all those who have played their part in steering us through an unbelievably challenging year.

"Coronavirus has been brutal for all involved and I know that many of our colleagues bear the emotional, physical and mental scars of the last 12 months, but their courage and determination in the face of constant uncertainty will never be forgotten.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the sacrifices made by our local communities who, by following government guidance, have helped slow the spread of the virus."

As was seen across the entire country, the emergence of Covid-19 in the first part of 2020 had huge implications for local health and care services.

Almost overnight, services at the region's three large hospitals – the Great Western Hospital in Swindon, Salisbury District Hospital and the Royal United Hospital in Bath – were scaled back and staff redeployed to prepare for the rapid influx of people needing urgent and emergency care as a result of coronavirus.

GPs quickly followed suit with all of the region's 94 practices taking the majority of services online, with video calls becoming the default appointment format and walk-ins stopping in favour of telephone-based triage and assessment.

In the first weeks of the pandemic, GPs were carrying out more than 3,000 video appointments a week – a 200 per cent increase on what was happening pre-Covid.

Elsewhere, healthcare staff were redeployed from their usual place of work to support colleagues working in alternative settings.

Charlotte Jones, Chartered Physiotherapist with Wiltshire Health and Care, who left her hospital-based role to help colleagues visiting patients at home, said: “The whole of Wiltshire Health and Care responded amazingly.

“Everyone has adapted how they work, and completely changed how services are provided, and I look forward to being able to re-join my other colleagues in the future.”

The pandemic also led to the introduction of innovative methods of care, such as drive-thru clinics and dedicated home visits to shielding patients.

Behind the scenes, cross-organisational working helped pave the way for the initial development of the new BSW integrated care system, which will see local health and care providers work together to take joint responsibility for the wellbeing of the local population.

For more information on local health and care services, as well up-to-date local news on the coronavirus pandemic, visit www.bswccg.nhs.uk.