

Chronicling our Covid-19 journey serves a number of objectives consistent with our mission, values and strategic objectives:



Shared insight into key events and decision making for all colleagues



Widens appreciation and understanding of the operating environment



Demonstrates an ongoing commitment to openness and transparency



Improves internal communication flows



Invites opportunity for greater levels of engagement and scrutiny



Strengthens accountability e.g. executive to the frontline and vice a versa



Constitutes good governance

We have consistently demonstrated a strong desire for horizon scanning best practice, being prepared to challenge established orthodoxies in pursuit of securing better outcomes and an insatiable appetite for implementing learning into practice. As difficult and challenging the Covid-19 experience is let's try and embrace it in the hope that good things will also emerge.

Step 1

In a crisis, you first need to meet people where they are. People's most basic needs must be met and they need to feel safe. Naturally, no one is interested in talking about the future when they are more concerned about hand sanitiser and toilet rolls.

In response, adopting a programme management approach a number of actions were taken to accommodate the rapidly changing circumstances while maintaining sufficient overview, strong accountability, financial control and risk management.

We ensure our colleagues are kept informed through regular updates, web pages with useful information and FAQs and notifications by text message. Our Board gave our leadership the freedom to make critical business decisions in an agile way. In turn, our leadership team empowers our front-line.

One of our top priorities is to ensure all essential PPE is readily available to colleagues in care and support services.

This is done in tandem with local authority partners and Welsh Government.

No matter the cost, the safety and well-being of people was paramount

Step 2

We realised there were a number of matters that required urgent attention which impacted our day-to-day work flow so we established nine key project themes:



PPE



Well-being



Service Delivery



Communications



Compliance



Customer



Deployment



Finance



New Ways of Working

Once the essential needs were being addressed, we began to gradually shift the focus towards adjustment, common purpose and opportunities for growth (although rapid innovation and learning was also taking place throughout this period).

At this stage our Chief Executive invited the Executive Board and managers across the organisation to undergo a process of pause and reflect. It was important that we took a step back and evaluated our actions and thoughts in the context of the external environment rather than continue to operate in emergency, crisis mode.



Colleagues are invited to share their fears, concerns, hopes and aspirations through a series of Facebook Live and video town hall conversations and other group formations.



Thus far our Chief Executive has engaged directly with over 500 colleagues and the following represents the unfolding story.

Step 3

There is an underlying anxiety expressed by some colleagues concerned about the uncertainty of the future which may have implications for their livelihoods and families.



Risk

Anxiety and uncertainty build and begin to affect colleagues' well-being, as well as the productivity and effectiveness of the business



Our response has been to consistently communicate messages that strike the right balance between cautiously optimistic and the reality of the situation, where many factors are outside our control. However, as a long-term social business we must see beyond the current political and economic climate to adapt and deliver our social mission.

Regularly communicating the availability of a wide range of counselling and support measures through Lifeworks. Allied with confidential one to one support offered through experienced and trained HR colleagues.

Pause and Reflect was in part initiated so that colleagues had the opportunity to think and contribute into a future that was not overly fixated with the crisis of the present.

‘I am amazed at how quickly people adapted to working from home’

The response to home-working has been positive. Colleagues commented on the positive benefits of not having to travel to our head office, St Hilary Court and the impact of this on carbon consumption.

People also commented on the flexible working arrangements which allowed them to better manage their work/life balance and accommodate caring and schooling commitments.

We undertook a step change in the adoption of new technology which has given greater confidence and willingness to embrace the digital world.

Conversely, a small, but not insignificant number expressed concerns about the loss of social relationships and enquired how this could be addressed.



Colleagues were overwhelmingly appreciative of the efforts of our IT team in helping to smooth the transition to remote working



Risk 1 The transition to home working is not accompanied by changing work and management practices, to accommodate the complexity of colleagues' circumstances

Risk 2 Frontline colleagues' well-being and mental health is affected in the longer-term, due to the stress and trauma of dealing with Covid-19 outbreaks and contending with excessive death and emotional situations



What additional measures should we be exploring to assist with the well-being of our colleagues, both immediately and in the longer-term?

We recognise some colleagues retain deep seated anxieties regarding their health and economic prospects which will require ongoing monitoring, support and actions

Step 6

Concerns were expressed at the impact of the virus on our customer base, who disproportionately live in the most deprived areas, work in low-skilled occupations and are heavily state benefit dependant. Socio-economic consequences are likely to follow the pattern of previous downturns, and it could be argued many of our customers have not recovered from the 2009 downturn.



Risk

If we do not put the right mitigations in place and re-think our role in supporting communities and economies, the impacts will be more harmful and long-lasting



What are the implications with regards to our current interventions and approaches? Do we need to modify or develop (perhaps radical) new ways of working to reduce the impact?

On the understanding that those who are vulnerable and marginalised will be further exposed, we will look to review how the work of our neighbourhood coaches can be better aligned to meet needs and aspirations.

With regards to care, how will we sustain good quality services and spaces in a damaged and fragile economy and market? How can we prevent people from falling into the cracks between siloed services?

‘We used to find the door to be half ajar and now it’s fully open’

Mostly colleagues thus far had found the experience liberating and empowering. Layers of bureaucracy had been removed, greater autonomy was exercised and decision-making short circuited to the perceived benefit of individuals, the organisation and customers. Colleagues commented that they were improving their resilience and resourcefulness and other new skill sets were emerging.

Colleagues attributed progress to the extensive work being undertaken in recent years to improve organisation culture.



Risk

If this new-found autonomy and agency felt by colleagues does not continue beyond the crisis and the benefits we have seen do not continue to materialise



What can be done to hold on to the positive practices, behaviours and culture that has emerged through the crisis and make them part of the way we work?

Are we taking a structured approach to learning what works for us and what does not?

A heightened awareness among colleagues emerges in relation to driving better cost and value throughout the organisation. Colleagues took it upon themselves to identify small and large areas for cost reduction and improved productivity, but quite rightly pointed to limitations of the existing technical infrastructure as a barrier to progress.



Risk

Colleagues' readiness to work differently and more efficiently outpaces the development of our infrastructure and we miss opportunities to drive greater value throughout the business



How quickly can we tackle the short term IT development issues such as Office 365/One Drive, the telephone system, Wi-Fi, telecare, paperless office before embarking on an advanced digitisation programme?

Step 9

Covid-19 has prompted the short term shift and numerous innovations in how data is used for public good, with a possibility that some of the shifts may become permanent.

So far through the crisis our customers have really responded well to enquiries about their well-being, particularly those who are isolated, which suggests that the position of trust we occupy is quite unique.



Risk

Our protectiveness of data and reluctance to push for greater flexibility may stand in the way of working proactively and identifying customers' problems earlier



How can we be proactive with our customers around health protection?

How do we better connect with public health?

How do we instigate the discussions across the sector?

Being digitally excluded can severely limit people's ability to participate in everyday life (a staggering 80% of Hafod's residents elected to respond the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) satisfaction survey via the post, in preference to an online questionnaire).

However, the ability to use digital technology to stay connected is only part of the picture. The ability to afford digital connectivity and equipment is also a barrier for many.



Risk

The negative effects of being lonely, isolated or lacking access to information and services online makes bad situations worse for many of our customers



How can we work with customers to address social isolation and loneliness?

How can we work with partners to pioneer low and high technology solutions, including the feasibility of mobile devices and internet being gifted as part of the tenancy start up?

Ostensibly our offer is significant, given the strength of community connections, endowments and skills we have at our disposal. These give us a major stake and anchoring role in local economies (‘Hafod Manifesto’).

We can, therefore leverage resources for the long term benefit of communities, continue to invest in pay conditions and career pathways and the branding of social care, develop our role in prevention and slowing down the escalation of major public health concerns and orientate supply chains to local suppliers.



Risk 1 The regulatory system does not support and facilitate our ambitions to work in this way

Risk 2 We lack the political support to move forward



How do we transition from an organisation still mainly procuring goods and services from larger to small suppliers linked to the locality model?

How do we influence policy and secure changes in the way we are regulated, to free us up to innovate and fulfil our potential as an anchor institution?

We must ensure the risk to the new normal and economic revival does not come at the expense of climate change. It is estimated to make our current assets carbon neutral will cost an additional £60million.



How do we communicate to tenants that life-cycle timescales for kitchens and bathrooms will be much extended and that instead money will be spent on alternative components; electrical heating, PV, solar hot water, cladding and higher standards of windows and doors to reduce energy costs and to decrease carbon emissions?

Step 12

Step 13

