



Awards 2014 Case Study

Award Winner

Value Award

Ysbryd Y Coed – Elderly Persons' Intermediate Care Unit

The statistics associated with dementia are staggering, with the disease set to affect more than 1 million of the UK's population by 2021 and already costing the economy £23 billion each year, more than cancer and heart disease combined.



It is estimated that the current £8 billion in direct care costs could triple within 20 years if action isn't taken to provide better care at lower cost.*

The integrated Project team entrusted with delivering the Ysbryd-y-Coed Elderly Persons' Intermediate Care Unit at Cefn Coed Hospital, Cockett, Swansea fully recognised the immense challenge presented. They were determined to provide a care unit which ensured long term cost effectiveness achievable through imaginative construction solutions linked to enhanced patient care. In this they were highly successful and were duly recognised as this year's winner of The Constructing Excellence in Wales Value Award.

The attention to patient-focused design principles was partly informed by the clinical team's experience and current best practice for older people's facilities. They include private en-suite rooms adaptable for couples, family or friendship pairs, all connected to the biggest innovation of the scheme, the safe 'wandering-loops'.

Three oval wards, designed to aid patients with dementia who are prone to wandering, are linked by a central zone. The design avoids the resultant stress and confusion of arriving at a dead end and being unable to navigate back to a point of safety, which is frequently the case in traditional design. Within each loop, there is a secure, landscaped courtyard with informal planting, sitting areas and areas of interest along the route which are accessible to residents and relatives or friends from the corridors and all have sightlines back to nursing stations for observation. The wandering loops themselves are wide, light and bright spaces that are colour coded to assist navigation. Colour and artwork have been subtly used to lend each area a different character, while natural light and ventilation have been utilised to improve clinical outcomes without increasing energy bills.

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service manager for old persons' mental health for Abertawe Bro Morgannwg

It is increasingly recognised that the building itself can serve as a therapeutic intervention and this has been born out at Ysbryd-y-Coed by feedback from staff and relatives confirming that patients instantly warmed to the environment, resulting in radically improved sleep patterns and attention span, and a decrease in stress, anxiety and violence levels. This has had an immediate impact in a reduction in the need for high-end medication, staff interventions and intensive nursing.

In healthcare, real value is measured in terms of the welfare of patients and the experiences of family, friends and staff using a facility. At Ysbryd-y-Coed, the positive impact is abundantly clear. There is hard evidence that goes beyond anecdotal feedback showing better patient outcomes and lower staff churn rate, along with an improved atmosphere for visitors. It is testimony to the team involved with this winning scheme, whose collaborative approach had as its constant focus the end user – the patient.

Jill Luckwell, service manager for old persons' mental health service for Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMUHB), said: “The project team clearly understood the needs not only of current and future patients but of their families, helping them play a real part in supporting their loved ones.”

Neil Holloman, key account manager for main contractor Interserve, part of the international support services and construction Interserve group, explained that all parties collaborated from an early stage, employing innovation and best practice to produce a finished scheme that held no surprises for the end-user. Every stage was designed, costed, market tested and risk assessed, before being signed off by the client.

A huge amount of effort was put into value engineering to deliver the project on budget, as oval buildings can be more expensive to build, Neil Holloman explained. “It is an expectation of the Designed for Life: Building for Wales Framework that the Supply Chain Partner will challenge the norm and bring innovation into their design and build. This was something we were able to deliver out of the Swansea Interserve

office,” he said. The building's steel frame, engineered partitioning and external envelope provide value for money shell and core construction, enabling savings to be reinvested in high quality and robust materials and finishes throughout the facility.

The overall financial value of the scheme is around £13.4m and sits within Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board's £72m “Reshaping Mental Health Services in Swansea” (RMHSS) programme of work. Whilst it was always the intention that the patient would have the maximum value of benefit from Ysbryd-y-Coed, lessons learnt on this project are proving of enormous value to subsequent phases of the RMHSS programme. Clinical outcomes have been captured for best practice knowledge transfer via Interserve's ‘Wiki’ Information Portal for application in future mental health projects.

In terms of sustainability, Ysbryd-y-Coed achieved BREEAM Excellent certification and more than 90% of the contract value was passed into the local economy and £9.8m worth of orders was let to Welsh based sub-contractors, thus short and medium term value was generated as the Welsh pound investment flowed into the local economy and community. In the unit itself, operational costs are down thanks to staff efficiencies, energy bills lower by 50% due to passive and active measures in the design, and a significant reduction in the drugs bill due to the decrease in challenging behaviour.

Initial reservations from some staff about the change from a traditional cottage hospital to the new state of the art facility were quickly overcome and they now look forward to coming to work, with morale boosted and stress levels reduced. And relatives have been overwhelmed by improvements to their relatives' health and well-being in the new environment, and are now able to contribute far more to their family member's care. With such clear benefits to all stakeholders, perhaps Ysbryd-y-Coed is a blueprint for the future of dementia care in this country.

*Statistic provided by The Health Foundation, an independent charity working to improve the quality of healthcare in the UK.

