



Purpose-led Partnerships: Transforming respiratory care and advancing practice change across Wales

This is a non-promotional asset produced and funded by AstraZeneca with input from the NHS Health Boards associated with the case studies enclosed and the National Strategic Clinical Network for Respiratory Conditions. It is intended to raise awareness of the burden of respiratory disease and share learnings from successful projects. It is intended for healthcare professionals, policymakers and the general public.



Dr James Calvert
Deputy Medical Director Wales

This publication showcases collective ambition and progress in improving respiratory care in Wales.

It demonstrates Clinicians shared determination to deliver better outcomes for people living with respiratory conditions and demonstrates the power of collaboration across organisations and sectors.

NHS Wales, through its Performance and Improvement team, the Respiratory Strategic Clinical Network, and Health Boards, has partnered with AstraZeneca to co-design innovative, value-based models of care.

The partnerships described each combined NHS leadership with specialist project management and technical expertise and resources, enabling faster progress while keeping patient needs at the heart of every decision.

The projects featured illustrate what can be achieved when teams work together. From new severe asthma pathways in Aneurin Bevan and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Boards to community-focused asthma care in Hywel Dda, and the development of a national breathlessness pathway, these initiatives are improving access, accelerating diagnosis, and supporting timely delivery of compassionate care in Wales.

The contribution of AstraZeneca has been essential in bringing technical insight, programme support, and convening of stakeholders to complement the experience and leadership of NHS teams.

Together, we have moved further and faster than would otherwise have been possible. The learning gained is already shaping practice and policy and will continue to inform future delivery.

Thank you to everyone involved for your commitment, collaboration, and shared ambition to transform respiratory care for patients across Wales.



Dr Ed Piper
Medical & Scientific Affairs Director,
AstraZeneca UK

This brochure reflects extraordinary energy and commitment across Wales to deliver improved outcomes for people with asthma and COPD. It is evidence for how a shared ambition across dedicated clinicians, managers and system partners can make important improvements at pace.

At AstraZeneca, we believe in purpose led partnerships. We work to clear principles and shared goals, then support local teams to take ownership so improvements can spread across health boards. In respiratory care our focus is consistent: proactive identification of those most at risk; earlier, more accurate diagnosis; and equitable, guideline aligned treatment that prevents exacerbations and keeps people well in their local communities. We also focus on generating real world evidence that shows the impact for patients and the system, including shorter waiting times, lower healthcare utilisation and reduced carbon emissions.

The projects highlighted here illustrate what's possible when teams work together. They demonstrate strong clinical leadership, a commitment to change, and measurable impact for patients and staff. Crucially, they offer scalable principles that local health boards have been able to adopt and adapt, fostering shared learning directly between teams so improvement can spread through peer networks, balancing national ambition with local ownership.

Wales is well placed to lead this approach, with a focus on value-based healthcare, robust clinical networks, and a culture of improvement aligned to the NHS 10 Year Plan. AZ has been delighted to bring resources that include technical insight, programme support, evidence generation coupled with our power to convene stakeholders and complement NHS expertise. We seek to be a positive catalyst for change and support the system to sustain and scale what is proven to work.

Thank you to everyone involved for your commitment, collaboration, and shared ambition to transform respiratory care for people across Wales.

The Challenge

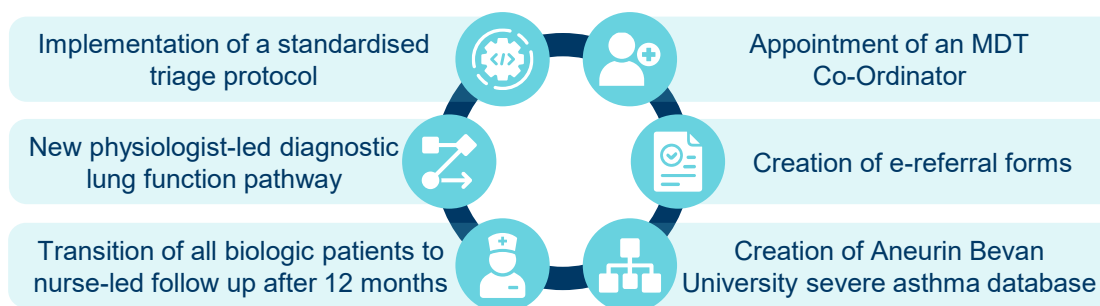
In 2017-2018, there were over 3,500 admissions for asthma in Wales.¹ Between 2009 and 2018, the number of deaths related to asthma in Wales increased by 43%.¹ The ABU Health Board has consistently had the highest rate of emergency hospital admissions for asthma over the last 10 years. The majority of patients with severe asthma are still not receiving the care they need and only about 20% of those eligible for biologic therapies are currently receiving these treatments.¹ In order to meet the increasing demands, there was a need for a sustainable, patient-centred transformation of the current asthma pathway to enhance patient experience, clinical workforce delivery and overcome existing barriers to provide an effective and collaborative service for a group of patients with a significant unmet need.



Our Collaboration

The collaboration between AstraZeneca Pathway Team & Aneurin Bevan University served to ensure equitable access to expertise across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board geography, ensuring continuity of care between primary and secondary care with earlier treatment optimisation to achieve control, improve outcomes, quality of life and reduce unscheduled health care utilisation. A mapping exercise was undertaken to identify areas for improvement with a broad range of stakeholders engaged to contribute to two workshops.

These workshops were designed to prioritise areas for change and effectively collaborate to develop and implement solutions that would ultimately improve and optimise the asthma pathway:



The Impact²

There has been an overall improvement in the patient journey with reduction of waiting times through a streamlined pathway:

-  Wait times for lung function testing **8 weeks vs 21 weeks** at baseline with overall reduction in time from GP referral to Consultant review
-  Time taken to drug initiation has fallen from **16 weeks to <4 weeks**
-  Reduction in asthma attacks in severe patients from median of **5 a year to 1 a year**
-  Reduced percentage of patients requiring hospital admission with acute exacerbation from **27% to 6%** (n = 62 patients with 12-month follow up data)
-  Overall patients treated **increased by 175%** (n= 117 to 322, based on the period of March 2023 - Dec 2024)

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Using the principles developed at Aneurin Bevan Health Board, we have now scaled the network model to support improved Severe Asthma care across North Wales through the AstraZeneca Donated Service Pathway Redesign Programme

The Challenge

Severe uncontrolled asthma is a debilitating, chronic disease, associated with a high economic burden and poor quality of life¹. In North Wales inconsistent provision across the Health Board had created inequity of access and only 16% of eligible patients accessing treatment². The distribution of asthma services across the three hospitals had also created duplication of resources, with diagnostic tests and hospital appointments often repeated across sites resulting in a poor patient experience. Although a robust Severe Asthma service was operating out of Glan Clwyd Hospital, patients from across North Wales had to travel across the health board to access their treatment; this had resulted in an estimated 30,000 miles of patient travel to-date².



Our Collaboration

-  We brought together multi-disciplinary teams from all three hospital sites, alongside patients and system partners, to develop a future service vision that would provide equity of access to biologic treatment across North Wales
-  Over 25 staff attended the pathways workshop helping to inform the future model with key themes identified such as ensuring care is provided closer to home and the importance of aligning resources across the health board
-  A Strategic Leadership Group was established with representation from the consultant, nursing, operational management and AHP teams
-  A new networked service was created across the three hospital sites with a weekly virtual MDT to review patients, share learning and reduce overall waiting times
-  An MDT coordinator role was developed, and new SOPs agreed across the network to streamline the patient journey and release clinical capacity

The Impact

-  The new network has drastically improved equity of access by opening treatment from **1 to all 3** hospital sites across North Wales
-  Existing patients are now being repatriated from Glan Clwyd back to Wrexham Maelor and Ysbyty Gwynedd Hospitals, **ensuring ongoing care is provided closer to home**
-  The number of patients treated has **increased by 30% in the 6-months** since network formation (224 in March to 292 in Oct 2025)²
-  The median time from MDT decision to patient treatment has fallen from **12 weeks** (April 2025) to **5 weeks** (October 2025) ensuring patients can access timely care²
-  An initial audit of 20 patients has demonstrated a total of **96 bed days admitted** to Wrexham Maelor Hospital (12 being ITU days) pre biologic treatment compared to a total of **11 days admitted** (no ITU days) post biologic treatment²

Case study developed by AstraZeneca in partnership with Dr Dan Menzies and Dr Katie Kemp, BCUHB Respiratory Consultants, to summarise the Severe Asthma Pathway Redesign Programme at BCUHB. Long Term Conditions & Multimorbidity pathways - supporting service redesign is provided to the NHS as Donated Goods and Services. AstraZeneca has funded this programme.

1. Jackson DJ, et al. Thorax (2021). 2. Data provided by BCUHB and correct as of December 2025.

Hywel Dda University Health Board

A Quality Improvement project formalising the identification and review of at-risk asthma patients to improve their health and wellbeing whilst supporting the use of low global warming potential inhalers to improve decarbonisation

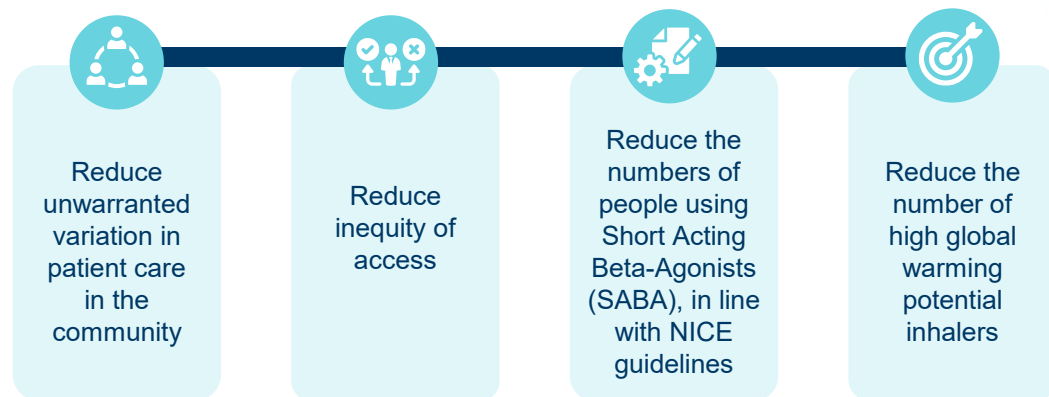
The Challenge

The prevalence of asthma in Wales is the highest in Europe, affecting close to 10% of the population whilst asthma mortality rates are as high as 2.3 per 100,000 patients. Wales has ambitious policies in place for decarbonisation and Public Health Wales have a target to be net zero by 2030. Subsequently, both asthma and COPD guidelines have set a target for 80% of all inhalers prescribed to have a low Global Warming Potential (GWP) by 2025.



Our Collaboration

A Quality Improvement project formalising the identification and review of at-risk asthma patients in line with All Wales Asthma Guidelines was initiated by the respiratory specialist team in Hywel Dda University Health Board (H DUHB). The QI project known as the Asthma Interface Nurse (AIN) aimed to improve the health and well-being of asthma patients in H DUHB and meet the targets set as part of the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan. **The AIN team's key goals were to:**



The Impact



The AIN team and GP practice nurses (trained and overseen by the AIN) have undertaken approximately **4207 annual reviews** of asthma patients during the 2024/2025 period



It was found that SABA usage was **reduced by 50%** in patients who were reviewed whilst Metered Dose Inhaler usage was **reduced by around 44%**



MART usage **increased by 225%** and Dry Powder Inhaler usage **increased by 44%** supporting an increase in the numbers of people receiving low global warming potential inhalers

At the start of 2024 AstraZeneca and Hywel Dda UHB entered a partnership to carry out a service evaluation of the work conducted by the IAN and then run an extension of the programme for a further 2 years until 2026.

The project was delivered via a Joint Working Agreement between AstraZeneca and Hywel Dda University Health Board. AstraZeneca has funded this programme. All information and data provided by Hywel Dda University Health Board. Data correct as of February 2026.

Wales Breathlessness Pathway

A bold partnership driven by a shared vision to address the pressing challenges faced by patients with chronic breathlessness through the co-design of an All-Wales partnership programme.

The Challenge

There was a clear direction from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care that respiratory health must be treated as a strategic priority for transformation across Wales. This work aims to strengthen the national approach to respiratory care and improve system readiness to manage the increased pressures anticipated in winter 2025/26. The vision was to develop a comprehensive pathway for patients experiencing chronic persistent uncontrolled breathlessness lasting more than six weeks, without an identified cause. The Community Breathlessness Pathway is a “Once for Wales” initiative, designed to provide a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach that supports timely diagnosis, avoids unnecessary admissions, and improves outcomes for individuals with chronic respiratory and cardiovascular conditions



Our Collaboration

Three regional workshops were delivered across Wales in July 2025, bringing together over 100 stakeholders to co-design a national model for assessing and managing unexplained breathlessness.

Key themes explored across the workshops included:



Short-life working groups were then set-up across the country, facilitated by AstraZeneca and the Respiratory Network, to further explore the areas covered in the July workshops. This helped identify and address the remaining gaps and support the development of a new comprehensive future pathway model.

Our Ambition

Several Health Boards will now act as pilot sites to test the Breathlessness pathway model, which aims to provide access to rapid, community-based diagnostics and a ‘one-stop’ approach to assessment and support. This will ensure individuals receive **the right care, in the right place, at the right time.**

The pathway is expected to make a **meaningful difference to people’s lives while helping to ease pressures on urgent and emergency care.** It will be underpinned by a comprehensive health economic evaluation, alongside an independent review to assess its overall impact.

This case study demonstrates that strong partnership and co-production are essential to overcome complexity and drive rapid progress in health service innovation. By engaging clinicians, managers, and strategic partners from across Wales, **the initiative has yielded a robust, future-facing pathway** with committed buy-in and optimism for further improvements.



Contacts

For more information regarding these partnership projects, please contact the following NHS teams:

Where

What

Who

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

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Hywel Dda University Health Board

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All-Wales

Wales Breathlessness Pathway

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