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Bulletin

Womenspire 2022

Celebrating Amazing Women Across Wales

The Chwarae Teg Womenspire Awards returned with a bang earlier this year, with a hybrid ceremony for the first time ever. After two years online owing to the pandemic, a live 'face to face' event took place at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay, whilst being streamed across ITV Cymru Wales Facebook Live and Twitter. The awards ceremony in September recognised the achievements of some of Wales most remarkable women and saw the honours shared across the nation. A real celebratory occasion, Womenspire showcased the achievements of its finalists – remarkable women from all walks of life, who have made incredible differences to their own lives and the lives of others.

Womenspire 2022 - Woman in STEM collecting her award - Joe Ferris of ABPI Cymru Wales, Katherine Axten - Winner of Woman in STEM 2022, Welsh actor and presenter Elin Pavli-Hinde, and Andrea Byrne of ITV Cymru Wales

The Chwarae Teg Woman in STEM award celebrates the women who are successfully advancing their own career, whilst making a real difference to the STEM sectors in Wales. The winner will be a point of focus for encouraging other women into these disciplines and supporting women to progress. ABPI is proud of its role in the award over the last five-years, and the calibre of the finalists is always incredibly high. This year, they were:

Paige Tynan, Wrexham: Paige was told by her science teacher in school that she would never make it and instead of studying science opted to study childcare instead, however, after failing her English exam owing to undiagnosed dyslexia, Paige smashed through her barriers and opted to study forensic science instead, she is now a highly skilled lecturer of bio sciences at the very university she studied at!

Tanya Jones, Gaerwen, Anglesey: Tanya is passionate about inspiring and educating people, young and old, into STEM careers in North Wales and beyond. Working as a mentor, events organiser, project officer and in many more roles, Tanya works tirelessly to empower, encourage, and signpost others into a wide range of roles within the STEM industry.

Katherine Axten, Cardiff: Deciding to study software engineering at university, slightly later in her career, Katherine boldly pushed through the judgement and inequalities she faced, to become a highly skilled software engineer. She also encourages and inspires other women to take roles in the STEM industry and gives them the confidence to change careers later in life by writing a blog about her experiences and including useful resources and advice.

Emma Yhnell, Cardiff: As a senior lecturer at Cardiff University and member of the British neuroscience association, Emma is making waves within her industry. She not only mentors and educates people of all ages on science and finding creative ways to get people interested in it, but is also working hard to improve the equality, diversity, and inclusion within her sector, often having to stand up against criticism to fight for her beliefs.

The finalists said more about the award – and their own journey – here.

Above: Katherine speaks to Andrea Byrne of ITV Cymru Wales after receiving her award

Right: Emily receiving her award

This year, the Woman in STEM award went to **Katherine Axten** (Caerphilly) – Working as one of the only female DevOps[1] engineers in a large IT company, Katherine has overcome an enormous amount of prejudice and discrimination to become the very skilled and successful software engineer she is today.

Emily Nicole Roberts from Pontarddulais received the Rising Star Award as well as the overall title of Womenspire Champion 2022. As a young woman with cerebral palsy, she has taken it upon herself to inspire, educate and support others living with disabilities. She impressed the judges with advocacy work and her humorous and informative YouTube videos. Emily started recording herself when she realised that there was a lack of practical information readily available for disabled people. She set about making 'how to' films which show disabled people that they can do everything that able-bodied people can.

Speaking recently of the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion to the bio-pharmaceutical industry and Life Sciences Sector, Pinder Sahota – President of the ABPI and Chief Executive of Novo Nordisk UK – said:

"Society is diverse and it's really important that our industry reflects this. We need to embrace equality, diversity, and inclusion if we're to deliver for the patients that we serve. And from a people point of view, having an inclusive and diverse culture will mean that we bring a variety of ideas and experiences to help us succeed in what we do. And here at the ABPI we're absolutely committed to making sure that all our members place equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of everything that we do."

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the UK Pharmaceutical Workforce

The ABPI exists to make the UK the best place in the world to research, develop and use the medicines and vaccines of the future. Creating diverse and inclusive workplaces that deliver innovations to improve the lives of everyone in the UK is critical if we are to deliver on our mission.

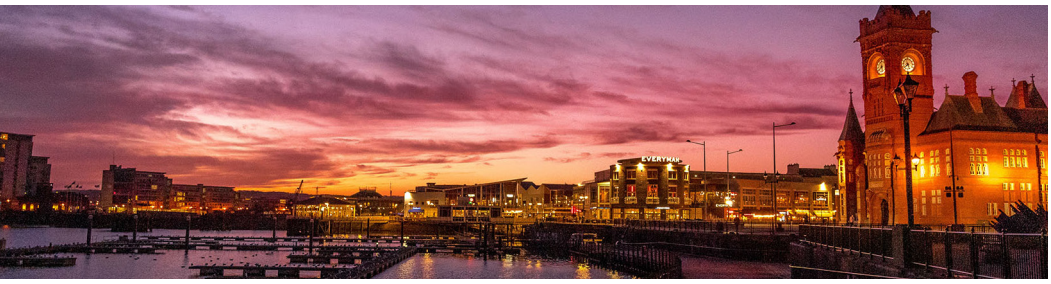
When we launched our inaugural Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy[2] in April 2021, we wanted to set a marker for the priorities where we felt the ABPI could have most impact. As a trade association representing a very wide range of member companies, in terms of size, HQ location, and focus, we wanted to be sure we would be supporting them and helping make a difference; using our voice to effect change.

Key findings from a report from Accenture[3], commissioned by the ABPI to mark the first year of its ED&I strategy, found the UK pharmaceutical industry is taking important steps forward in its ED&I journey. The research suggests that companies have made a start, especially in vision and accountability. However, there is further opportunity to expand diversity across a wider breadth of ED&I characteristics and to continue strengthening accountability to accelerate tangible progress.

Six months on from the publication of the Accenture report, the ABPI held its second ED&I conference in October 2022. Christie Harper – Founder and Managing Director of Gatehouse ICS Ltd., based in Ammanford, was a keynote speaker. She has reflected on her presentation in the piece she's written on the next page, which discusses the urban-rural jobs divide in life sciences and its potential impact on young talent entering the industry.

[1] https://www.flagship.io/glossary/devops-engineer/
[2] https://www.abpi.org.uk/media/o0sfmlhy/abpi-equality-diversity-inclusion-strategy-2021.pdf
[3] https://www.abpi.org.uk/about-the-abpi/abpi-s-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-uk-pharmaceutical-workforce/

Are rural South Wales school leavers able to access Wales-based pharmaceutical jobs and careers?



Author: Christie Harper is the founder and Managing Director of Gatehouse ICS Ltd; a blended team of entry level and experienced individuals working on health care related market research and business development for health innovators, life science consultancies and the pharmaceutical industry. Prior to this role she worked in a global pharmaceutical market access consultancy for 15 years, ultimately as shareholding Director. Gatehouse ICS was created to increase access to life science careers among school leavers in rural areas; particularly rural South Wales and has provided numerous such individuals with entry level positions and internships. Gatehouse ICS aspires to become a rural talent incubator for the industry and for this model to be replicated in other areas of rurality. Feel free to get in touch via: Christie.harper@gatehouse-ics.com

When I moved to Wales in 2009, I worked remotely for a global consultancy which provided services to the pharmaceutical industry. Rather than working from home, I rented a desk in The Life Sciences Hub, which overlooked the beautiful Cardiff Bay. In this tall building I was a part of an exciting community with representatives from big pharmaceutical companies and small innovators. I also worked part time for Swansea University, which, through various channels, supports new ideas and inventions in healthcare. Clearly, the life sciences industry in Wales was, and is, flourishing.

However, one issue soon became apparent. While just a one-hour drive to Cardiff and half an hour to Swansea from my home in Ammanford, Carmarthenshire, there are, like in much of rural Wales, a high number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Yet, the life sciences industry was reporting a skills gap in Wales.

This led to me forming a Community Interest Company (CIC) which attracted grant funding to explore the issue and ultimately to the formation of a commercial company, Gatehouse ICS Ltd, based in Ammanford, into which the aims of the now dormant CIC were wrapped. Gatehouse ICS conducts market research to gain insights and connections for the industry to help health products come to the market and reach the patients who will benefit from them. My first employee was a chemistry masters graduate from Cardiff University who had been unsuccessful in her career search and had never been pointed towards jobs in the pharmaceutical industry.

In investigating why this 30 to 60-minute commute seemed like an unreachable gulf, I realised the first barrier was a practical one. Many young people are not learning to drive as quickly as they have in the past. This points towards public transport as a way to reach centres and, indeed, Ammanford does have a train station. However, almost laughably, the train search engine suggests you must leave the day before in order to get to Cardiff for 9am. If you happen to negotiate a later start and finish time, you cannot get home the same day if you leave after 5pm. Added to this is the cost of £26 return for a daily commute that takes two hours each way.

While remote working is the norm and perhaps the ideal for seasoned professionals, it is not helpful for entry level individuals. There is a need to learn workplace conduct, to be able to ask questions and to improve inter-person communication skills which are difficult to attain when working from home. Some home working situations may be unsuitable - one of my employees was working from a caravan outside her house during the pandemic.

Continued overleaf

It is a tall order to improve transport services in anticipation of demand not currently in existence. This in turn becomes a social issue because it both arises from and reproduces an impression that no-one from this geography is suitable for or seeking jobs in the local cities. This filters down to expectations and advice from peers, family, and teachers, which may further stall career potential.

When surveying local school pupils, I was initially encouraged to see that career and academic aspirations were higher than expected. However, I was dismayed to see that this did not correlate with an intention to stay in Wales. Most career-minded individuals assumed they would need to move away. Likewise, when interviewing my entry level employees, even some of my university graduates no longer recognised the value of going to university if they want to stay local. This perception is reinforced by peers and family who are wary of the debt without the guarantee of income.

While the local schools were still inspiring people to go to university, we found that pupils entered A-levels with high aspirations and became disillusioned when they felt there were no viable jobs after they finished studying. One such individual, who wanted to stay in South Wales, came to us after abandoning her plans for a German degree.

There is a strong pre-disposition generally for people to want to stay or return to Wales. Given the thriving life sciences industry, this should not mean that such individuals must count themselves out of a viable career path locally. There must be more ways to work together. Rurally based senior professionals could collaborate, mentor, and showcase the industry. Government or industry could fund endeavours like ours to become incubators to give rural young people entry level skills training, industry orientation and line of sight to further opportunities, which may include remote working, once foundational learning is embedded.

I fear that if we don't act, we will see further widening of the urban-rural jobs divide in this industry or face a dramatic outflow of our young talent - while ironically still talking about a skills gap in the Welsh life sciences industry.

Diversity and inclusion in clinical research

A breath of fresh air for all!

There is a disappointing lack of diversity amongst those participating in clinical trials in the UK and as part of our EDI Strategy[4], the ABPI is working with our members and the UK Government to help overcome these barriers and make clinical research in the UK more diverse and inclusive.

We believe that every eligible patient should have the opportunity to participate in a relevant clinical trial regardless of their background or where they live. Many groups are under-served by research[5] and this is why we were pleased to hear about the work that the All Wales Cystic Fibrosis Centre is doing in their Project Breathe research – which is open to all their adult patients.

[4] https://www.abpi.org.uk/about-the-abpi/abpi-s-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy
[5] https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/include/home/guidance?pli=1

A Breath of Fresh Air

Author: Cendl Xanthe - Lead Research Nurse All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Centre

Project Breathe is a remote monitoring study that started at the All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Centre, University Hospital Llandough, in the summer of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic was in its first wave in Wales during this time, which enabled the project to be prioritised, speeding up the approvals process to allow the study to be accessible by people with CF sooner than anticipated.

Below: Cendl Xanthe, Lead Research Nurse, All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Centre

The study supplied a lung function monitor, activity monitor, oxygen saturation reader, scales and thermometer which connect via Bluetooth to a dedicated, free to use app on both android and apple devices. Subjective scores of cough and wellness were also added, and the app is able to track health events and medication use to add to the overall, holistic overview of the patient.

The study had an inclusive eligibility criterion, meaning we were able to approach almost all people in our care to offer them this exciting opportunity, with the target recruitment being 100 people (1/3 of our adult patient population). People with CF were able to take part regardless of their genetic mutation, age, disease severity or socio-economic background as all the required equipment was supplied. Set up was supported by research nurses and ongoing support was supplied via email, phone or in person, to encourage engagement and overcome barriers to inclusion such as technological ability and living distance from the centre. Remote support proved popular with those involved and the team were able to run support groups and gain valuable feedback using online platforms.

Using Project Breathe enabled remote care to be possible throughout an uncertain time and beyond, helping to accelerate care nearer to home to become more of a possibility for those we care for. The dashboard developed by the project team connects care teams to patient data, allowing for timely review of health trends both face to face in clinic and virtually. People with CF who regularly entered data are also able to review their own lung function, weight, and wellness trends amongst others, promoting a sense of ownership over their own data and health outcomes. Pulmonary exacerbations, which are a clinical feature of CF, can be spotted earlier and reported to the clinical team to allow for early intervention, reduced hospital inpatient stays and prompt diagnosis and treatment.

Increasing the use of virtual clinic and training clinical members of the multi-disciplinary team to be able to review data remotely via the dashboard saves the users time and money travelling to site as often as they previously would have, promoting sustainability as well as perhaps increasing access to healthcare for those living greater distances from the centre.

Overall, project breathe has been a positive experience for both those participating and healthcare staff caring for people across Wales with CF. The project goes from strength to strength and is ever evolving by listening to those using the app to improve and add features, as well as developing machine learning algorithms to predict exacerbations before clinical symptoms present.