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PIONEERING HEART SERVICE CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust's **Cardiac Rehabilitation Service** has come a long way since January 1986 when it began life as a research trial for patients living in the Bridgend area who were recovering from a heart attack.



Some of the Cardiac Rehabilitation Team members

The service, which was the first of its kind in Wales, is now available to patients living across the whole of the Trust area (more than 700 use the service every year) and similar programmes have been adopted by all Trusts in the UK. Twenty years ago, there was very little aftercare for patients recovering from a heart attack and it was soon recognised that recovery rates could be improved if patients took part in a structured cardiac rehabilitation programme.

Over the years, the original trial, which was staffed by **Linda Speck** (Consultant Clinical Psychologist) and Elizabeth France (Health Visitor), has been expanded into a comprehensive service for patients recovering from heart surgery as well as heart attacks. Linda now leads a multidisciplinary team (comprising specialist nurses, dieticians, physiotherapists, health visitors, a pharmacist and secretaries) who provide inpatient care, offer counselling and information prior to discharge from hospital, as well as care immediately following discharge, and outpatient programmes giving advice on lifestyle changes to ensure that patients look after their heart and stay healthy. Specialist **Cardiac Rehabilitation Health Visitors** liaise with trained Community Health Visitors working within GP practices, enabling patients to receive aftercare support within their own community rather than in hospital. In 1992, the Cardiac Rehabilitation Team helped former cardiac patients to form the Bridgend and District Cardiac Support Group, which is now a thriving, independent, voluntary organisation.

Consultant Cardiologist, **Dr Jonathan Goodfellow**, said: "Maintaining and developing cardiac rehabilitation services remains a high priority within the health community, with the aim of further extending the service to provide support to patients who have long term heart failure problems."

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