

# Welsh Wound Network: 2011 Evaluation

## Executive Summary

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The Welsh Wound Network (WWN) has received funding from the Welsh Assembly Government's A4B Knowledge Exchange Programme (KEP). In December 2010 the Network's Management Team commissioned Jenesys Associates to conduct an independent evaluation in order to gain a detailed understanding of the impact on participants and stakeholders and to identify areas of good practice and lessons for the future.

The evaluation collected evidence from a number of sources:

- 63 responses to e-surveys sent to businesses academics and clinicians who are members of the Network.
- Interviews with 12 businesses
- Interviews with 11 academics and clinicians

88.9% of all survey respondents rated their overall impressions of the Network as 'very good' or 'good'. Individual activities also received very positive ratings. For businesses the opportunities to share information and in particular to network with clinicians and Welsh Health Supplies, leading to collaborative working, were the identified as the main successes. Academics and clinicians highlighted information-sharing and learning aspects, such as the format used for industry presentations and improved understanding of the scope and extent of wound care expertise available in Wales. Some areas for development or improvement were identified such as a more-stable funding base, and including participants from the care home and charitable sectors.

Business identified three types of impacts. The most common technical impact was 'added value to a product or process'. The most common commercial impacts were 'opened new markets' or 'enabled commercialisation'. The most common operational impacts were 'opened new markets' or 'enabled commercialisation'. Academics and clinicians also identified impacts including 'raised profile or image of organisation', 'improved technical knowledge or skills' and 'stimulated collaboration with Welsh business or NHS'.

The evaluation identified a number of the key themes:

**People and Networking** - The balance of clinicians, business people and academics is one of the Network's most important strengths. It is felt to be completely non-hierarchical and everyone feels that they are able to contribute to the discussions and information-sharing. Another success factor is the Network Manager, whose neutrality, knowledge and connections are considered to be key success factors for the Network. The breadth and variety of the membership is highly praised, with interview subjects saying it is unique and indicating that they meet people at the Network whom they would not encounter elsewhere.

**Role and Position of the Welsh Wound Network** - The Network is considered to be unique in the composition of its membership; the scope it provides for collaborative thinking; and the fact that it already works across almost all areas of wound care. Members who are based outside Wales are especially aware that nothing similar exists elsewhere in the UK. They and others believe it to be an example of best practice for collaborative innovation. For businesses, the ability to network with Tissue Viability Nurses in an efficient and effective manner is one of the Network's key strengths. Bringing together all the disciplines involved in wound healing is raising the profile of wound care and creating a sense of community amongst all who are involved, as such there is increasing recognition that Wales is home to a variety of world-class expertise in wound care.

**Outputs, outcomes and impacts** – For businesses, the main output has been better understanding of clinical processes and priorities. Clinicians and academics have identified some specific impacts. Members in all categories consider that perhaps the greatest outcome of the Network will be its positive impact on the quality and efficiency of patient care in Wales.

**Sustainability and future** - Members are concerned about the ongoing operation of the Network, given that current funding ends on 31 March 2011. It has created an inclusive forum for innovation, not only in products and services, but also in processes and ways of working. Members feel strongly that this forum does not exist elsewhere and must be sustained if its full potential is to be achieved. Given that the impact and benefits of the Network extend beyond the Higher Education-business relationships supported by A4B, its current funder, members believe it could be considered for mainstream support from the Welsh Assembly Government, reflecting its potential to have positive impacts within the operation of the NHS and on patient care.

The Welsh Wound Network is achieving its published aims and delivering wide-ranging impacts. The evaluation recommends that the Network and the Welsh Assembly Government should jointly and actively be considering ways of mainstreaming support for the Network, recognising its broad impact and potential to deliver tangible outcomes, not only in terms of strengthening the knowledge base, raising the profile of Welsh expertise and encouraging collaborative innovation, but also in providing benefits for Welsh businesses, health policy and healthcare.