

## GROUNDBREAKING NEW WELSH KIDNEY SUPPORT PROJECT LAUNCHES

Kidney Care UK, the UK's leading kidney patient support charity, Wales & West Utilities, and the Welsh Kidney Network are working together with NHS Wales to offer specialist support to 1,500 people with kidney failure in Wales.

The *Kidney Support and Welfare Wales* project is the first time that a charity, a utility company and the NHS health boards across an entire country have come together in this way. The 1,500 people in Wales who receive their haemodialysis in hospital – and their families – will be able to access free, impartial guidance and support that centres around welfare with a focus on working together to help maximise income, reduce utility-related expenditure and support overall wellbeing.

Haemodialysis is the most common treatment used to treat kidney failure - it is needed when your kidneys are not able to work properly causing toxins to build up on your blood. When you have haemodialysis your blood is allowed to flow, a few millilitres at a time, through a special filter that removes wastes and extra fluids. The clean blood is then returned to your body, this also helps to control your blood pressure and keep the proper balance of chemicals - like acid, potassium and sodium - in your body. Most people who have haemodialysis in hospital will do this three times a week for 3-6 hours each time.

The cost of living crisis has disproportionately impacted people with kidney failure; many people with kidney failure also have anaemia which means they feel cold all of the time. When you have kidney failure you also need to reduce the amount of phosphate and potassium you are consuming – Kidney Care UK have been tracking the costs of food prices for ten common food items suitable for someone with kidney failure. These have increased between 20% and 28% between May 2022 and May 2023. Due to such frequent hospital treatment only 26% of people on dialysis are in full time employment and the cost of travel to and from treatment adds up.

**Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services**, said: “Kidney disease affects thousands of people in Wales and this first-of-its-kind support will make a real difference to people’s wellbeing. The work being done by Kidney Care UK, NHS Wales and Wales & West Utilities is a fantastic example of how different sectors can come together to support people suffering from long-term conditions to live well; especially as we navigate the cost-of-living crisis.”

Some of the ways the Kidney Support and Welfare Wales project can help includes (but is not limited to): Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application support; financial grants; kidney disease patient information; benefits advice; free specialist kidney counselling; access to reduced utility tariffs; and free home carbon monoxide alarms.

**Laura Talbot, Kidney Support and Welfare Wales Project Manager**, comments: “We’re delighted to be working with Wales & West Utilities & Welsh Kidney Network on this ground-breaking welfare and wellbeing project. The funding that Wales & West Utilities are providing will help us to ensure that the 1,500 people on haemodialysis in Wales know that there is a range of support out there to help them live their lives to the full and that they are not alone.”

**Dr Gareth Roberts, Consultant Nephrologist and Clinical Lead for the Welsh Kidney Network**, said: “Patients with advanced kidney disease face many barriers to remaining in or joining the workforce after starting dialysis. The consequent low income, particularly when compounded by increasing cost of living means that many of our patients live in relative poverty.

“Too many of our patients are forced to choose between eating, heating their homes, or paying electricity and fuel costs. As a kidney network, we believe that helping patients to gain financial and social support is a key priority. We are excited to work with Kidney Care UK sector and Wales and West Utilities to deliver this

first of its kind, Pan-Wales, pan-sector project. We believe that this will provide the expert support and guidance necessary to ensure our patients get the financial benefits to which they are entitled.”

**Nigel Winnan, Customer & Social Obligations Strategy Manager, at Wales & West Utilities**, added: “We are proud to be supporting Kidney Care UK and the Welsh Kidney Network in this pioneering partnership to deliver energy related welfare advice and support to people with chronic kidney disease across Wales.

“This initiative provides a real opportunity to improve the quality of life for people with kidney disease, particularly for those who depend on haemodialysis. We are pleased to rally behind this important work which will impact so positively on many of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people living in the country at a time when it is more critical than ever.”

For more information about the project go to [www.kidneycareuk.org/KSWW](http://www.kidneycareuk.org/KSWW)

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For further information please contact the Kidney Care UK Press Office on 01420 541 424 [comms@kidneycareuk.org](mailto:comms@kidneycareuk.org)

Facts and statistics about kidney disease can be found here: [www.kidneycareuk.org/news-and-campaigns/facts-and-stats/](http://www.kidneycareuk.org/news-and-campaigns/facts-and-stats/)

### **About Kidney Care UK**

Kidney Care UK is the UK’s leading kidney patient support charity, providing practical, financial and emotional assistance for kidney patients and their families throughout the UK. We believe that no-one should face kidney disease alone; find out more at [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org) or call 01420 541 424.

### **About Wales & West Utilities**

Wales and West Utilities look after the 35,000km of pipes that keep the gas flowing to heat homes, power businesses and keep the lights on across Wales and south west England. We respond to gas emergencies, connect new homes and businesses and we invest £2million every week to deliver energy that is safe and secure for our 7.5million customers. We help communities, businesses and the economy thrive by delivering reliable, affordable and sustainable energy and we are committed to supporting those most vulnerable in society with practical help and guidance on the energy issues that impact on individuals, families and our communities. For further information please see <https://www.wwutilities.co.uk/>

### **About the Welsh Kidney Network**

The role of the Welsh Kidney Network (WKN) is to collaboratively plan and commission adult kidney services in Wales on behalf of the Welsh population and NHS Wales. Our Kidney Network is built on quality, best practice and innovation placing patients at the heart of everything we do. To find out more please visit [www.wkn.nhs.wales](http://www.wkn.nhs.wales)