

# Leg Club update

## Powys Leg Clubs

In recent years in Wales we have been following policies designed to encourage partnership working with local communities (Welsh Assembly Government [WAG], 2003; WAG, 2005). The *Rural Health Plan* (WAG, 2009) identifies that the culture within rural communities is often based upon self-sufficiency and self-reliance and, as a result, these communities have strong social networks. Within Powys, this culture is contributing to the growth of Leg Clubs®, which appear to be flourishing.

## The Leg Club® model

In 1995 Ellie Lindsay introduced the concept of community-based leg ulcer care. Leg Clubs aim to provide leg ulcer management in a social environment. The clubs are owned by the local community and not the health provider, a model which promotes patient empowerment. The clubs are a unique partnership between district nurses who provide the care, the patients who make up the club membership, and the local community who provide voluntary assistance to manage the club and support the members.

It is important that services delivered locally are of a high quality. An audit of the assessment process is undertaken annually and the nurses adhere to strict guidelines when assessing and managing patients who attend. An initial audit of the management of chronic wounds managed by district nurses in Powys has shown lower numbers of patients with leg ulceration in the caseloads of teams with a Leg Club. Dressing changes are also less frequent. When leg ulceration has healed, the club members continue to attend for treatment as there is also a strong focus on prevention.

In recent years, four Leg Clubs have been established within the communities of Powys in Wales.

## Llandrindod Wells Leg Club

The initial Powys Leg Club, which opened in 2006 in Llandrindod Wells, is now well established. The district nurses still enjoy the opportunity to share their knowledge and provide support, a unique experience for nurses used to working in isolation. The club has established a volunteer nail cutting service with volunteers trained by the podiatrists. The club has successfully applied for grants to transport members who would otherwise be visited at home by district nurses and miss out on the social experience of attending.

## Llansanffraid Leg Club

The Llansanffraid Leg Club opened in 2008 and continues to evolve as different needs are identified. The club members benefit from regular exercise classes in between leg care sessions and socialising with other members. Jane Banwell, the District Nursing Team Leader, recently won a Tissue Viability Champion Award of £1500 for her work, which helped the team provide care for patients with chronic oedema and lymphoedema. Jane completed a lymphoedema diploma module and can now offer patients an extended assessment. The award will be used to further develop services for patients with oedema and lymphoedema who attend the leg club.

The Llansanffraid club has also successfully applied for an educational grant and an 'education corner' is being planned. This will provide self-care information for the club members.

## Knighton and Presteigne Leg Club

The Knighton and Presteigne Leg Club opened last year and continues to develop — it currently has 192 members. People from the community are encouraged to join the club for an assessment, receive care from the district nurses and enjoy the social activities. A podiatrist employed by the health board also attends once a month for consultations.

## Llanidloes Leg Club

In April this year, the fourth Powys Leg Club was opened in Llanidloes. Already thriving, this club has an average of 35 members attending each week. There are ten volunteers who choose to attend each week rather than working to a rota, which would cut down on their attendance.

Every month a podiatrist, social worker, dietician and a representative from the pensions agency visit the club to give advice and support. Exercise classes are held to increase the members' mobility. Social events also give the members and volunteers a chance to bring a buffet and talk over lunch.

## The future

The district nurses involved with the clubs are enjoying the opportunity to participate in a creative manner and enhance the services delivered to local communities. Each of the four clubs are involved with ongoing projects such as the education corner; and, as these new ideas are successfully implemented, they can be shared among other clubs.

Two additional district nursing teams are currently in the early stages of planning to open leg clubs in their own areas. Although the initial enthusiasm to start up a club often comes from the district nurses, once people from the local community get involved they soon become an invaluable asset for each club's ongoing success. **WUK**

**Linda Gethin, Lead Community Nurse,  
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## References

- Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *The review of Health and Social Care in Wales*. WAG, Cardiff
- Welsh Assembly Government (2005) *Designed for Life: Creating World Class Health and Social Care for Wales in the 21st Century*. WAG, Cardiff
- Welsh Assembly Government (2009) *Rural Health Plan – Improving Integrated Service Delivery Across Wales*. WAG, Cardiff