

Prifysgol Wrexham Wrexham University

Healthcare Heroes – inspiring future healthcare study and careers

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Context

In the academic year 2024-25, Wrexham University partnered with Coleg Cambria to deliver 'Healthcare Heroes', a collaborative, careers-focused initiative designed to support student progression and awareness of healthcare-related higher education (HE) pathways. Funded by the Reaching Wider North and Mid Wales Partnership, the initiative reflects a joint commitment to widening access and enhancing learner transition across the tertiary education sector.

This event is structured to engage two key groups:

- **School pupils (Years 10 and 11)** – to inspire and inform future choices in healthcare and social care careers.
- **College students (primarily Levels 2 and 3)** – to provide exposure to university-level study and career planning support within a university setting.

The case study outlines the good practice in supporting transitions across the tertiary landscape, particularly in the healthcare discipline, which is facing growing skills demands regionally and nationally.

Healthcare Heroes initiative

Healthcare Heroes is a subject-specific, multi-institutional engagement programme targeting both pre-16 and post-16 learners. The approach is deliberately collaborative, involving academic and outreach staff from Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria, alongside over 25 industry and sector exhibitors. Delivered on campus at Wrexham University, the event creates a high-impact, real-world learning environment.



The inaugural event in 2024-25 included:

- **Hands-on interactive workshops** e.g. medical simulations such as intubation
- **Taster lectures** from university faculty
- **Employer engagement booths** from local and regional healthcare providers
- **One-to-one careers advice** from both college and university staff.


The day was designed to simultaneously support aspirations for future healthcare careers while demystifying the pathways into further and higher education, especially for learners from non-traditional backgrounds.

The event targeted school pupils in Years 10 and 11, Level 2 and 3 college students as well as Access to HE adult learners. Particular attention was given to the needs of learners who may be first in family to attend university, or those returning to education.

Impact and outcomes

The Healthcare Heroes event welcomed approximately 295 learners, including:


- an estimated **130 college students** from Coleg Cambria
- over **160 school pupils** from 8 schools, including Elfed High School, Llangeferni High School, Upton Hall School and others.




‘ The combination of interactive situations and employer access was perfect. The students didn't want to leave. ’
School teacher

Key outcomes include:

- Strong positive feedback from exhibitors, educators, and students
- Demonstrated enthusiasm for hands-on healthcare engagement activities
- Enhanced cross-sectoral working between the university and college teams.



‘ The arrangements and welcome were second to none... inviting Level 2 and 3 learners as well as Access students was fantastic! ’
Sue Bracegirdle,
Future Workforce Manager,
HEIW



‘ We really enjoyed the event... it was fruitful and we've already had interest from other colleges wanting to attend next time. ’
Chris White, Academic Staff,
Wrexham University

Institutional learning and future plans

- The 2024-25 event was oversubscribed and other colleges and schools have indicated their interest in future engagement. It is planned to hold Healthcare Heroes every other year going forward, hosted at Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria.
- Feedback from 2024-25 will inform future iterations of the event which will follow a similar model with hands on activity and local collaboration.
- The model has potential for scaling to other disciplines and partnership areas.

Conclusion

Healthcare Heroes serves as a model of good practice in collaborative transition support, demonstrating the potential of multi-partner approaches to engage learners in practical and impactful ways. By bridging the gap between secondary, further and higher education, Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria have established a dynamic platform for inspiring the healthcare professionals of tomorrow.

This initiative not only supports immediate learner awareness and aspiration but also contributes to regional skills development, widening participation, and long-term sector sustainability.

This case study has been produced and shared as part of the Medr-funded QAA Cymru project: Enabling learner progression into and within higher education.

Find out more about the project on the QAA Cymru [website](#).

