

## “Homeless hope” voluntary nurse led outreach in wales UK

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### Abstract

Homeless hope nurses are qualified nurses from a varied cross section of our health service. We are all volunteers and use our professional knowledge and judgement to support our street homeless to take ownership of their health needs. We provide basic footcare and education, donations of food, clothes, bedding and hygiene items at street level once a month in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, three cities across wales. We use our own professional knowledge to break down barriers over time, establishing a workable rapport. The non-judgmental, accepting nature of volunteers has been beneficial in developing engagement with the percentage of rough sleepers that do not access services. We have become a trusted voluntary service to our rough sleepers. They know when we are coming and are happy to see us, often excited to tell us changes that they have put in place. We often encounter individuals with septic needle wounds, traumatic injuries from fighting and cellulitis. Wounds are cleaned and dressed with non-medicated dressings and referred in to the system via signpost to ensure they are monitored. Foot health, although a basic intervention which provides education against trench foot and other avoidable conditions, is also a platform to develop knowledge and understand needs. This personal intervention encourages individuals to think about their personal health needs and issues around them becoming homeless. Skilled communication, in the form of listening and reacting professionally and sympathetically to prompts, allows the individual to acknowledge issues which need addressing. This can also provoke emotions which are also dealt with professionally due to the nurses working background. Due to the nature of our work and voluntary capacity, we join up with services within the cities to highlight any concerns or issues that require further input or monitoring. We also handout details of services available and encourage engagement.

### Biography

Donna Marie Thomas earned her Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Swansea. She has 14 years varied nursing experience in Medical, Surgical and Cardiac ITU and is now a Community Staff Nurse for Powys Teaching Health Board. In 2018 she shared her life's journey with the Queens Nursing Institute Homeless Health conference, London. Sexually abused from the age of 7, she spent 9 years of physical and mental torment between the streets of London and numerous care settings. Returning to school, developing her literacy skills progressing on to university, proudly qualifying as the nurse she was told she would never become. Now a mentor, nurse prescriber and working towards a post graduate certificate in palliative care, she also leads a voluntary team of nurses on to the street to support and encourage homeless people who do not engage with services to engage and take ownership of their health needs.



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