

Brexit poses threat to NHS, Health Secretary warns

Mr Gething will tell the Assembly later today (Tuesday, 26 June) that the Welsh Government is working with the UK and Scottish Governments to deliver as smooth a transition as possible. However he warned several areas need to be addressed urgently to avoid damaging the NHS in Wales.

He said: "EU nationals make up an important part of the NHS and social care workforce. Every single employee must be made to feel welcome and valued for the role they play in delivering services which benefit the people of Wales and the wider contribution they make to our communities.

We will continue to press hard for unambiguous permanent residence status to be granted to all EEA health and social care workers and their families currently working in the UK. We also need assurance that we can continue to recruit medical staff from Europe through quick and reliable systems.

Decades of cooperation and harmonisation of standards on medicines and medical technologies have produced proven benefits for EU citizens. Any restrictions on trade, customs checks and trade tariffs are likely to reduce the availability of medicines, lead to delays in the supply of drugs and vaccines and potentially increased costs to the NHS in Wales."

The Health Secretary also set out the benefits and needs for continued cooperation with Europe on diseases control, food safety standards and medical research.

He added: "The UK Government must take notice of these concerns. We will continue to work with them constructively to ensure that all those affected are provided with as much certainty as possible over their future rights and status. Many of the risks I have highlighted to health and social care in Wales would be mitigated or removed altogether if the UK Government secures a sensible Brexit founded upon reality. If they do not, it may have real and lasting health and wellbeing consequences for individuals, families and communities across Wales."

Pioneering project delivers Ultrafast broadband for Welsh rural community

With internet speeds averaging 4Mbps villagers in Michaelston y Fedw, west of Newport, decided to form a Community Interest Company to bring ultrafast Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband to residents and businesses with an upload and download speed of 1Gbps or 1000Mbps.

The community project has employed contractors to do some of the work, while teams of volunteers have taken part in activities such as digging chambers, fibre splicing, laying out ducts and fitting out the village's communications hub.

Villagers raised the money required to build the network in the knowledge that once built, the connections would be eligible to be funded by the Welsh Government's Access Broadband Cymru scheme or Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher once the speeds had been reached. Both schemes are available for premises which cannot currently access superfast broadband.

The village pub, community hall and church are already connected to the ultrafast broadband and work is underway to connect over 175 premises in total in the community.

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital Julie James called into Michaelston y Fedw to see how the villagers pulled together and used the Welsh Government's voucher schemes.

Julie James said:

"While our programme Superfast Cymru has transformed the digital landscape in Wales, with over nine out of ten premises now able to access superfast broadband as a result compared with just over half when we began, we know there are communities which are not able to access it.

"It's great to see how the community of Michaelston-y-Fedw have spotted an opportunity to use the Welsh Government's voucher scheme along with real community spirit to achieve an increase in broadband speed which is a real game-changer. They are now able to benefit from some of the fastest internet speeds in the UK, which is a credit to all those involved in this project.

"Earlier this year I announced proposals to bring faster internet to communities in Wales which were not part of the Superfast Cymru or commercial rollouts, and this includes looking at what communities can do together. I'm pleased to see what has been achieved here, which shows that community power coupled with government support can really make a difference."

David Schofield a director of the Michaelston y Fedw Internet Community Interest Company said:

“Ultrafast internet is now a reality in Michaelston y Fedw. This has been achieved through a huge amount of effort by local volunteers who have turned out in all weathers to help build our network. Without them, the support of landowners, the village hall, local investors and the Welsh Government grant schemes this would never have got off the ground. We now have internet speeds that are world class, and this makes all the effort worthwhile.”

Caroline Hill and Ben Longman of the Cefn Mably Arms pub said:

“As proprietors of the Cefn Mably Arms public house, we are proud and grateful for the connection to the newly created Michaelston y Fedw Ultrafast Broadband. As a very busy country pub in an era of doing business by the internet, we can spend less time with behind the scenes operational matters such as working with suppliers, banks, marketing etc. With fast upload and download speeds we can spend more time overseeing what really matters about our business, which is being with our customers and staff, ensuring we give the highest standards of service for all our patrons. Similarly, our patrons will enjoy the free high-speed Wi-Fi for all aspects of modern communications whilst enjoying a visit to our pub and village.”

Windrush Day welcome chance to thank Welsh migrant community

On the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush and her 492 passengers from the Caribbean, Ministers will today join friends from Race Council Cymru and Black History Month Elders at an event at the Senedd to acknowledge the contribution the Windrush generation have made to our country.

Leader of the House, Julie James will host the celebration, as part of a week of events to mark Refugee Week, to commemorate Windrush Day and recognise its wide historic and present-day significance.

The recent outpouring of support for the Windrush generation reflects the respect Welsh people hold for those who answered the call all those years ago to make Britain their home. While racism and discrimination still occurs

within Wales, Julie James says we must continue to promote and safeguard our principles of fairness, inclusivity and equality.

“Today we pay tribute to the contributions made to Wales by the Windrush generation and their descendants, as well as the other migrant communities who came before and after. We thank them for their efforts and sacrifices over the generations. We will continue to welcome and embrace those from other places who seek to improve our communities and we will challenge discrimination faced by these communities wherever we find it” she said.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething, who is also speaking at the ceremony, said,

“Refugees have brought a wealth of experience and a range of skills and abilities to Wales, and our health service has benefitted immeasurably for it. 2018 is also the 70th anniversary of the NHS and it is difficult to imagine the continued success of our health system without the vital support of migrant communities and their descendants.”

Uzo Iwobi, CEO for Race Council Cymru and Chair of the All Wales Black History Network, said,

“It is gives us great pleasure to work with Welsh Government and all the partner organisations to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Windrush migrants arrival and their contributions to Wales. It has been bitterly disappointing to see the manner in which some Windrush migrants are being treated by the UK government in recent months. This event is hosted by the Leader of the House and Chief Whip Julie James AM to set a marker in the sands of time that makes a clear statement that Wales celebrates and values the contributions of our Black History Elders, the Windrush elders and their families who have given years of selfless services to the Welsh Society over the past 70yrs and more. Race Council Cymru also applauds the work and contributions of all commonwealth migrants and all migrants who continue to serve their communities, public, private and third sector organisations across Wales. Join us for a free event to celebrate our Windrush Elders and their families at the Senedd on the 22nd of June 2018.”

Margaret Thomas, UNISON regional secretary said,

“UNISON Cymru Wales is a proud sponsor of the 70th anniversary Windrush commemorations. That generation and their children have enriched Welsh life. The NHS also has its 70th birthday this year and we pay tribute to the contribution African-Caribbean workers

and all immigrants have made to Welsh public services. The dedication and compassion they have shown throughout their lives contrasts with the unforgivable treatment the Windrush generation received at the hands of the UK Conservative government. That government has destroyed livelihoods and families threatening British citizens with deportation.

“In UNISON we aspire for the best, treating people with dignity and respect. We’re proud that Wales is a compassionate nation. We must continue to be tolerant and welcoming. We thank the Windrush generation for their support and contributions to our union, our communities and our country.”

Rocio Cifuentes Director of Ethnic Minorities Youth Support Team (EYST) said,

“EYST Wales welcomes this event to mark the arrival of people from the Caribbean to the UK. Caribbean people have made a huge and positive contribution to the UK and Wales, and we are very pleased to be supporting these important events in Cardiff and Swansea. We are pleased that Welsh Government and Local Authorities are also willing to contribute to these as this sounds an important message of solidarity and welcome to the diverse communities of Wales, which is so important particularly in current times when a divisive narrative can often be the loudest.”

£12m to boost employability

Communities for Work Plus is aimed at helping people like Jordan who was already a participant on Communities for Work, the sister programme of Communities for Work Plus when a series of seizures left him in a coma for four weeks. Jordan was training for a career in the construction industry and while he has made a remarkable recovery due to his determination and his commitment to his rehabilitation, he has not recovered enough to cope with physical demands of working on a construction site.

The Communities for Work team, therefore, supported him through a Level 2 Business Administration course, which he completed just six weeks after leaving hospital. This, combined with his previous construction training and experience, was enough for him to secure a job as an administration assistant with ITS Construction in the company’s newly opened Swansea office.

The Minister launched the scheme, which will provide intensive mentoring and support to address the complex barriers to employment whilst visiting Seion Newydd in Morriston, where Swansea Council’s Communities for Work Plus team

were holding a community drop in session.

Communities for Work Plus contributes to the Welsh Government's Employability Plan which aims to eliminate the gap in working age unemployment and economic inactivity rates between Wales and the UK average within ten years; reduce the number of people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training; (NEET); increase the number of disabled people in work; and eliminate the qualification gap between Wales and the rest of the UK.

The Minister said:

"Sustainable employment is the best route out of poverty. The employability plan, which I launched earlier this year, recognises that some people experience barriers which prevent them entering work and advocates an individualised approach to helping those furthest from the jobs market into work.

"Communities for Work Plus is a perfect example of this approach, supporting people to undertake further training or providing practical help and advice to people to support people in achieving their aspirations. The programme will build on the success of other similar programmes which have already demonstrated that this approach works so I am delighted to be officially launching it today and look forward to seeing it help many more people to find work."

[New programme to improve the lives of people with a learning disability in Wales](#)

The way services are delivered for people with a learning disability in Wales is to be transformed to ensure they have what they need to lead successful lives, Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies has announced today.

Around 1.5 million people have a learning disability in the UK; some have a mild, moderate or severe learning disability which remains throughout their lives. There are approximately 15,000 adults with a learning disability are known to social services in Wales, with potentially at least a further 60,000 people not known to social services.

In 2017, the Welsh Government established the Learning Disability – Improving Lives Programme to better understand whether people with a learning disability have what they need to lead successful lives. It considered what a

person and their families and carers may require across their life course and how these needs are currently being met.

Last week, the Welsh Government published A Healthier Wales, its long term plan for health and social care. This provides a blueprint to build and strengthen services for people with a learning disability and their families and carers, ensuring the seamless delivery of services focused around the needs of the individual and encouraging good practice to be shared consistently across Wales.

The Improving Lives Programme will focus on improving services in five key areas:

- early Years – reducing adverse childhood experiences and improving the ability of parents with a learning disability to bring up their children
- housing – new models of supported housing will be developed, helping people to live closer to their friends and families
- social care – making sure everyone who needs it has a access to good quality care and support which is focused on their needs
- health – through reasonable adjustments to mainstream services and access to specialist services when needed. To address health inequalities, making sure people with a learning disability receive the annual health checks they are entitled to and health boards ensure they meet the needs of people with a learning disability when in hospital
- education, skills and employment – supporting young people to make the most of their potential, and when they become adults ensuring they have the right support to allow them to live successful lives, through providing targeted careers advice and making sure more people with a learning disability have paid jobs.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“In the Welsh Government’s Strategy, Prosperity for All, we’ve challenged ourselves to look at the services we provide to ensure they support everyone to live a healthy, prosperous and rewarding life.

“Over the last year, we’ve met more than 2,000 people with learning disabilities, their families and carers to better understand whether they have what they need to lead successful lives. The response from parents and carers shows we have some work to do before we can be that sure all services are person-centred and flexible enough to meet people’s needs.

“The Improving Lives Programme I’m announcing today will put people and their families at the centre of our services, and give them a say in the services they receive. We will ensure services are seamless and work together, which will hopefully benefit everyone, whilst ensuring those who need additional support experience a level of equality when accessing services.”

To support the implementation of the programme, the Minister has established a Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, whose membership includes people with a learning disability and families and carers key and key professionals from local authorities, the health sector and charities.

The group will be chaired by Mrs Gwenda Thomas, the former Assembly Member for Neath and Deputy Minister for Social Services in the Welsh Government between 2007 and 2014. Ms Sophie Hinksman, a representative of All Wales People First will continue in her role as to Co-Chair.