

NHS Bursary to continue in Wales – Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething

The bursary, for eligible student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, was scrapped in England in 2017.

In Wales, the full bursary package will continue to be available for those who commit in advance to work in Wales for up to two years post qualification.

Of the 2180 students applying for the bursary in 2017/18, only 3% declined to work in Wales post-qualification, meaning the vast majority of students trained in Wales will work in Wales after their studies.

The Health Secretary said:

Health care students are the future of our NHS, which is why, unlike in England, we are continuing to support them during their studies in return for a commitment to work in Wales.

This sends a clear message about how much we value our health care workforce and sets out our commitment to the future of our NHS.

The Health Secretary added:

As well as a commitment to extending the bursary, we're investing record levels in our NHS workforce. Since 2014, the number of nurse training places commissioned has increased by 68%. We're also taking positive action to attract more health professionals from the UK and beyond to come to Wales, to train, work and live.

New fund sees appointment of 80 new teachers to reduce class sizes

The new teachers will be appointed to schools which have large infant class sizes and also have high levels of deprivation, special education needs and/or where teaching and learning need to improve.

The new teachers will help to create smaller infant classes, so a school which currently has two infant classes of 29 or more pupils could instead

have three smaller more manageable infant classes.

This will improve both the quantity and quality of the time that teachers spend with their pupils, while also helping to reduce teachers' workload.

The £36m fund comprises of £16m of revenue which allows local authorities to recruit the extra teachers, and £20m of capital which allows local authorities to build the additional classrooms and learning space needed to further reduce class sizes.

All local authorities in Wales will benefit from extra teachers after submitting bids for the revenue element of the grant, which amounts to £1.3m in 2017/18. Bids for capital element of the grant will be approved shortly.

The Education Secretary yesterday visited pupils in the nursery class at Awel y Môr Primary School in Port Talbot who will, as of this September, benefit from an extra teacher when they move into Reception.

Awel y Môr is a prime candidate for the funding, having above national average levels of both free school meals and SEN.

Kirsty Williams said:

"Time and again, teachers and parents tell me that class sizes are a concern. That's why one of my first actions as Cabinet Secretary was to announce this £36m fund.

"International research and evidence tells us there is a positive connection between smaller class sizes and attainment, particularly for our youngest pupils from poorer backgrounds.

"Additional teachers at schools like Awel y Môr will be able to devote more time and individual attention to each of their pupils.

"That's good news not only for the pupil and the teacher but the school's ability to improve as a whole; smaller class sizes are crucial for both improved attainment in those early years of education and helping teachers to manage their workload.

"When seen in the context of broader reforms we're making such as reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and strengthened initial teacher training and professional development, this will also make a real difference in giving teachers the time to teach and learners the space to learn.

"This is central to our mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system which is a source of national pride and confidence.

Sam Greasley, Headteacher of Awel y Môr Primary School said:

“This new fund will have a genuine impact on Pupil Standards. Securing smaller class sizes enables us as teachers to work more closely with individual children.

“We set high expectations for all pupils but acknowledge that pupils need differentiated levels of support, which is more achievable in smaller classes.”

First Minister opens new 21st century school in Rhymney Valley

The Idris Davies School has replaced the former Abertysswg and Pontlottyn Primary Schools and merged with the existing Rhymney comprehensive school to form the 3 – 18 campus.

Supported with over £4m of Welsh Government funding, the school will provide the very best education facilities for pupils and staff to help drive up educational standards across the county.

The school has play an extensive outdoor area with play equipment, a planting area for the garden club and an amphitheatre for outdoor teaching and events. The school will also be home to a state-of-the-art Flying Start part time childcare facility, providing mornings sessions for children and Families First parenting programmes.

During the visit, the First Minister said:

“It’s a pleasure to officially open the new Idris Davies School, supported with £4m of Welsh Government funding. Named after the renowned Welsh poet, the school is steeped in history – but, today, we bring the school fully into the 21st century.

“It has been good to speak with pupils and hear first-hand how the state-of-the-art facilities in this new 3-18 campus are helping them learn, feel inspired, and get the most out of the school day.”

During the official opening the First Minister and the invited guests was treated to a concert by the school children.

£2.3m for new hybrid theatre for vascular surgery at Glan Clwyd Hospital

The project has also been supported by a legacy of more than £500,000 from the Livsey Trust. The charitable trust, set up in memory of former Rhos-on-Sea residents Robert and Flora Livsey, supports services at Glan Clwyd Hospital.

The funding will convert an existing theatre into a state-of-the-art hybrid theatre capable of performing complex vascular surgery. It will support a new vascular network model centred at Glan Clwyd Hospital and retaining procedures at Ysbyty Gwynedd and Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

The network model for vascular surgery was recommended in an invited review by the Royal College of Surgeons, and will mirror best practice provision across the UK.

The new theatre will allow a full range of procedures to be carried out in a single room. It will be equipped with advanced medical imaging devices, meaning theatre and radiology staff can work together, with patients benefiting from imaging and minimally invasive surgical procedures at the same time and in the same place.

The one site approach will also provide an improvement to surgical training, allowing multi-professional training in one place.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Glan Clwyd Hospital today, Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“This is an exciting development for vascular surgery in the area. There are many patient benefits to centralising complex services on one site; in particular we expect to see faster recovery times as a result of procedures being undertaken using less invasive techniques.

“We also expect the development of the vascular network and this significant investment to lead to more sustainable on-call rotas and that it will increase the attractiveness of the Health Board in terms of the recruitment to consultant and other posts. This is very welcome news for patients and staff in North Wales.”

Dr Evan Moore, Executive Medical Director for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said:

“The investment in a hybrid theatre will give us the best

facilities possible to care for patients from across North Wales in need of complex vascular surgery.

“Developing the theatre here at Glan Clwyd Hospital, will also support the training of specialist vascular staff, contributing to a robust, sustainable service for North Wales residents.”

[NHS Wales responds to extreme weather and severe winter pressures](#)

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Despite experiencing one of the busiest winters on record, in the vast majority of cases, NHS Wales has delivered timely, professional care to patients.

“It has been the second busiest January to March for attendance at emergency departments on record, including very high levels of flu and elderly admissions. The extreme weather in early March also made it extremely difficult for our NHS to operate, which has clearly had an effect on waiting times in emergency departments across Wales.

“Once again I would like to thank health and social services staff for their outstanding commitment in delivering care during a very challenging period. We have invested an additional £20m over the winter to help health boards and social care cope with the extra pressure. Despite continued unscheduled care pressures, health boards were still able to make progress with scheduled care during this busy time.

“There were improvements in waiting times for treatment in February compared to the previous month. Those waiting less than 26 weeks improved by 1.7% over the month, and the number waiting over 36 weeks decreased by 17%.

“The number of people waiting more than 14 weeks for specified therapy services fell by 44% over the month and to the lowest since August 2011. The number of people waiting more than 14 weeks for diagnostics decreased by around a third and is the lowest since Nov 2010.

“February also saw improvements in cancer treatment and child and adolescent mental health services waiting times.

“Our continued investment in social services is clearly having an effect, and the numbers for delayed transfers of care in March remain historically low, the eighth lowest monthly figure since 2004, despite all the system pressures.

“The Ambulance service again met their target for red calls for the 30th consecutive month since the new model was introduced despite continuing increasing demand and busiest March on record. The average daily number of red calls in March was higher than in February, and the fourth consecutive month that the daily average has been over 70.

“I am pleased NHS Wales has continued to deliver professional emergency and scheduled health care throughout this extremely busy period. Resilience planning put in place by health boards and local authorities has helped deliver this and we are working with them year round to improve that planning for the future.

“However, we recognise some patients have been waiting longer than is acceptable and we have been clear with health boards about our expectations around performance, and will work with them to evaluate measures taken this winter.”