

Minister praises co-op club supporting people with dementia

The 'Me, Myself and I' (MMI) Club in Briton Ferry was established in response to the growing care and support needs of local people living with early onset dementia.

A wide range of activities are offered to guests, while training is provided to people who care for and support their dependents and relatives. They also offer training to people who wish to develop careers in the care sector.

In 2016, a new law – the Social Services and Well-being Act – was introduced in Wales. It places a duty on local authorities to promote the development of not for private profit organisations, such as co-operative organisations, to provide care and support and support for carers, and preventative services, with the aim of opening up the ways in which people receive care and support.

The MMI Club has received support through the Wales Cooperative Centre's 'Care to Co-operate' project, which is helping people establish their own co-operative group or organisation to support the delivery of local social care and well-being services. The project is funded via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant, receiving over £600,000 over the course of three years.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"I was really pleased to visit the Me, Myself and I club in Briton Ferry to see and hear first-hand the great work taking place there to support those living with early onset dementia, and the vital training and support they provide to the people who care for them.

"The club is a great example of how our landmark Social Services and Well-being Act is delivering real, positive change in our communities. It's an excellent example of how co-operatives are opening up new ways for people to receive care and support in their own communities. It also gives them a very clear voice and control over how that care and support is shaped and delivered.

"The Welsh Government is committed to making Wales a dementia friendly nation, which ensures people with dementia feel valued and are supported to live as independently as possible in their own communities."

111 service to be rolled-out nationally

111 is a free treatment and advice service, managed by a team of professionals, who will treat or direct users to the right health service for their need. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Currently the service is only available in the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board and Carmarthenshire areas, where it was launched as a pilot in October 2016 to test the practicalities of combining NHS Direct Wales and the GP Out of Hours services.

The service brings together NHS Direct Wales and GP Out-of-Hours call handling and triage into a single service. It differs from other UK models by having a greater proportion of clinical staff within it.

The decision to roll out follows an independent evaluation of the pilot. It found the service received over 71,000 calls in the first six months of operation, with 95% of survey respondents saying they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

Although changes cannot be wholly attributed to 111. The evaluation found a 1% decrease in Emergency Department attendance in Abertawe Bro Morgannwg during the first six months of service. There was also a reduction in ambulance conveyance to Emergency Departments. This change was mainly seen in non-urgent conveyances – down by just over 25% during the evaluation period.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I am pleased to announce that following the success of the 111 pilot we will be rolling out the service nationally over the next 3 years.

“I’m very encouraged to see evaluation which suggests a link between 111 and a decrease in ambulance conveyance. It is also clear from feedback that this service has been valuable in supporting patients and helping the NHS to treat patients with urgent care needs more effectively.

“We’ve been open and honest about the pressure our Emergency Departments are under, particularly this winter. People can help make a difference by using our health service sensibly. The 111 service will support people to receive the most appropriate services for their needs, at the right time and in the right place.”

Chris Powell, the Welsh Ambulance Service’s Area Manager for 111/NHS Direct Wales, added:

“As the hosts of 111, we’re really pleased by the progress made and the encouraging feedback received during the early stages of the pilot.

“People living in the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and Carmarthenshire areas have been reaping the benefits of 111 for many months now, and soon everyone in Wales will have access to this service. This is another step towards a more modern approach to delivering urgent care, and we look forward to building on the success of 111 to date.”

[Finance Secretary proposes changes to improve collection of business rates in Wales](#)

Non-domestic rates raise more than £1bn each year in Wales, raising vital funding for public services, including education, social care, waste management and housing.

While the vast majority of businesses pay their rates on time, information collected from local authorities suggests up to £20m may be lost to avoidance every year.

Professor Drakeford said:

“As with any tax system, there are those who set out to avoid or reduce their non-domestic rates liability.

“The Welsh Government is committed to reducing the opportunities for avoidance behaviour and to helping organisations investigate cases more effectively.

“It cannot be right that the efforts of the considerable majority to abide by the rules and pay their dues are undercut by a minority intent on exploiting or abusing the system.

“I am pleased to publish a consultation about a range of ideas which could help to address the avoidance of non-domestic rates. I am keen to hear the views of ratepayers, industry representatives and local authorities, about how we can make our non-domestic rates system more effective, fairer and less vulnerable to misuse.

“While avoidance may involve only a small minority of ratepayers, when they do not contribute their fair share it is to the detriment

of local services, the wider community and other ratepayers.”

The Welsh Government provides more than £200m of support to businesses every year to help them pay their rates bills, this includes the new permanent small business rates relief scheme, which will come into effect on April 1 this year.

[The consultation will run from 4 April until 27 June 2018.](#)

£152,575 for Anglesey Council flood defence repairs

Extreme rainfall resulted in widespread flooding across the county. As well as flooding to properties, a large number of drainage and flood risk management assets which reduce flood risk to properties were also damaged.

Announcing the funding, Hannah Blythyn said:

“I am pleased to agree over £150,000 to Anglesey Council to help repair the significant damage caused by flooding last November. Heavy rainfall led to 31 properties being flooded in Llangefni, Dwyran and Benllech. In addition, in Llangefni a number of people were evacuated from their homes. Many flood risk management assets such as walls and earth embankments were also damaged.

“As weather patterns continue to change, flooding is likely to become more frequent. We want to do all we can to reduce the flood risk to our communities while helping them to adapt to the risks they face. Repairing these damaged assets and drainage is essential to ensure the communities they serve remain resilient to future storms.”

More than £4m to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh

Groups that will benefit directly from this fund include:

- Yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol
- Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru
- Mentrau Iaith
- Merched y Wawr
- Young Farmers Clubs Wales
- Papurau Bro Welsh – language local newsletters
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru

Announcing the funding, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan said:

“Reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050 is a very ambitious target and while education is key to this aim, the every day use of the language in all walks of life is equally important.

“Welsh cannot simply be the language of the classroom. For it to thrive, we all, as Welsh speakers, have a responsibility to use it. Organisations funded by these grants provide a wide range of opportunities for children, young people and adults to use Welsh socially.

“High profile events such as the National Eisteddfod and Tafwyl, as well as the opportunities provided by the organisations at a local level play a vital part in ensuring that the Welsh language and culture is strong in our communities across Wales.

“These grants recognise the contribution of these organisations to the future well-being of the language and will support the excellent work they do in promoting Welsh as a living, vibrant language.”