

Record numbers of front-line staff working in Welsh NHS

The figures have been welcomed by Health Secretary Vaughan Gething, who said the increase is a clear demonstration of the Welsh Government's commitment to Wales' National Health Service.

The statistics show that there are now more than 90,000 people (headcount) employed by the NHS in Wales, up 1,880 (2.1%) since 2016 – a record high.

They also show the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) directly employed NHS staff increased by 1,629 (2.1%) over the last year to 77,917, up from 76,288 in 2016.

The statistics also show:

- The number of FTE hospital consultants was 2,466, up by 97 (4.1%) from 2,369 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE qualified nurses, midwives and health visitors was 22,612, up 134 (0.6%) from 22,479 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE ambulance staff was 2,084, up by 39 (1.9%) from 2,045 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE scientific, therapeutic and technical staff was 12,799 – up by 370 (3.0%) from 12,429 since 2016 – a record high.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“I'm really pleased there is now a record number of staff working in the Welsh NHS, a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to our health service. More qualified nurses, more hospital consultants and more ambulance staff is evidence of a government that is investing in the future of its health service.

“The good progress we've made around staffing, announced today, is a positive, but we recognise there's always more work to be done. That's why we're investing in the education and training of healthcare professionals in the Welsh NHS, ensuring we develop the workforce of the future.

“I've also confirmed that NHS bursaries for student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in Wales will continue – demonstrating our commitment to ensuring the health service has the staff its needs for the future.

“Through our successful Train, Work and Live campaign, we will continue to do all we can to encourage more health professionals to Train, Work and Live in Wales.”

Education Secretary launches new Foundation Phase Excellence Network

The Foundation Phase Excellence Network brings together leading figures from across the education spectrum to ensure a more structured approach to develop Foundation Phase practitioner support for those working with children age three to seven.

With the aim of inspiring young minds together, and supported by £1million Welsh Government funding, the network will include representation from local authority education services, schools and child care settings that deliver the Foundation Phase, regional consortia, Higher Education and third sector organisations which will work together to share expertise, experience, knowledge and best practice.

A new online community learning zone has also been established to facilitate the sharing of information, resources and research between practitioners. The zone will also host 20 new case studies including three short films which showcase effective practice in Foundation Phase.

They have been produced by working collaboratively with schools and settings from across Wales in five key areas of practice: child development, environment experiences, leadership, pedagogy and Welsh language. The case studies will be available on the new zone during March and April.

Welcoming the launch, Kirsty Williams said:

“Building on similar models to our already successful National Network for Excellence in Mathematics and National Network for Excellence Science and Technology, this new Foundation Phase network will support workforce and leadership development, boost the research capacity of the education profession in Wales and ensure that implementation of the Foundation Phase happens in a consistent and effective manner.

“Practitioners in the Foundation Phase are doing an incredible job, one of the toughest but most rewarding jobs around, and they deserve all our support. This network and its supporting online resources are just the start of a new level of professional development in Foundation Phase for school settings.

“This development goes to the heart of what our national mission and the new curriculum is about – raising standards, reducing the attainment gap and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence.”

The new online community learning zone is hosted on the Welsh Government's learning platform – Hwb – and can be accessed here: <http://hwb.gov.wales/fpen>

[Continued funding for British Transport Police](#)

The continuing revenue grant funding will see £265,000 in 2018-19, £273,000 in 2019-20 and £281,000 in 2020-21 going to British Transport Police to fund their existing additional operational personnel operating in the Welsh Sub Division.

Welsh Government has also approved additional grant funding of £194,000 for the first year (2018-19) and £196,000 for a second year (2019-2020) for a pilot scheme to expand neighbourhood policing at Rhyl, Tenby and Machynlleth and surrounding railway routes.

At Tenby and Machynlleth, the PCSO's will be based alongside Home Office police for partnership working. At Rhyl, there will be a uniformed sergeant as well as PCSO's under the pilot scheme, which will be evaluated with a view to potentially renewing it.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Our railways are vital in keeping the country moving, whether it is to carry us to work, to socialise, or in our efforts to reduce the number of cars in our towns and cities.

“It is important to all rail users that they feel safe and the British Transport Police play a huge part in this.

“By expanding neighbourhood policing at Rhyl, Tenby and Machynlleth, we will be looking after passengers on even more of the Arriva Trains Wales lines.

“Our funding has helped BTP, who considerably exceeded their crime reduction target over the last three years, out-performing other BTP areas and Home Office forces, and winning a number of awards. The holder of the forthcoming new Wales and Borders franchise will be expected to continue the tripartite funding contribution currently provided by Arriva Trains Wales.”

Taking a fresh look at local museums over Easter

Lord Elis-Thomas, visiting the vibrant Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum in Aberystwyth, hailed the role local museums play in both their local communities and in supporting tourism.

Local museums are being increasingly imaginative in what they offer to visitors. This year, through Welsh Government funding, and working in partnership with the Kids in Museums and Get it Loud organisations, Amgueddfa Ceredigion has added cutting edge music gigs to its impressive range of activities. The acclaimed singer Gwenno entertained around 180 people in the atmospheric museum, once a music hall and cinema.

The sell-out matinee gig is the third this year by high-calibre performers in Welsh museums and libraries, following successful performances in Swansea and Bargoed. Gwenno has received rave reviews in the music press for her first album – Y Dydd Olaf, which won the Welsh Music Prize in 2015, and new album Le Kov.

The Museum, which completed a major refurbishment in 2016, now runs a popular and diverse events programme – including film showings, yoga classes, talks, workshops and even sleepovers for younger visitors. It recently hosted Radio 4's popular Any Questions programme. The Museum is also home to the Ceredigion Heritage Youth Panel, where people aged 16 to 25 can get involved in learning more about and promoting their local heritage, as well as a Young Archaeologist's Club. Members of the panel have had the chance to learn new skills in digital marketing and event production through getting involved in the Gwenno gig, and will be making a short documentary film of the event.

The Minister, speaking after the event, said

“Local museums really do offer so much to visitors and local communities alike. Amgueddfa Ceredigion is a shining example of a dynamic local museum which attracts people of all ages through the doors. Live gigs are another terrific way to attract new audiences.”

Sarah Morton, Sustainability Officer at Amgueddfa Ceredigion said:

‘Working with Get it Loud and Kids in Museums has been very rewarding. Apart from the prestige of hosting Gwenno during the day, the support Get it Loud has shown towards the members of our Ceredigion Youth Heritage Panel has been invaluable. Its so exciting to see the museum come alive and to connect with a totally different audience.’

Alison Bowyer, Executive Director of Kids in Museums, said:

“Kids in Museums and Get It Loud in Libraries have been delighted to partner for Gigs in Museums. It’s been fantastic to make some noise about the amazing things on offer in Welsh museums, showcase the vibrant Welsh music scene and bring new audiences into museums and libraries. Overall we’ve been thrilled by the response to the gigs and we look forward to continuing to support live music in Welsh museums and libraries in the future.”

[Welsh Innovation showcased at Smithsonian, New York](#)

The two products by E2L have been designed to maintain mental engagement, self-worth and dignity for people with dementia, helping them to recognise and retain the use of everyday objects. Both have been extensively tested among people with dementia in the UK.

They are part of a collection of 70 innovative designs from around the world developed in the last decade that assist with daily routines which are part of the Access+Ability exhibition.

E2L, who are recognised as an Ambassador for Innovation, received support from the Welsh Government’s Overseas Business Development Grant to visit new territory in New York, Florida and Mexico. As a result the two products were selected by the curators of the exhibition.

The products highlighted are the Simple Music Player which can improve cognizance and lucidity and is easy to use. The Placemat for Dementia is a non-slip table setting mat for people with dementia, allowing them to carry out this daily task.

The company specialises in product design to meet healthcare needs which have often been identified to them by carers and health professionals that add to the quality of life of the patient and are easy and familiar to use.

Lyndon Owen CEO of E2L said:

“We are very proud to have been curated into this exhibition designed to showcase products that genuinely assist dementia sufferers and their families. Our product is also available in the museum shop and is a practical example of the type of product engineering E2L undertakes.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“It’s great to see these innovative products, designed and produced in Wales, on show at this prestigious exhibition in New York. I’m pleased the Welsh Government is able to assist the company with raising the profile of their products overseas as they bring real benefits to people with dementia.”