

## **“PrEP is already beginning to make a difference” – Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething**

The study on the drug Truvada® was launched in July 2017 and when taken correctly and supported by wider, preventative sexual health services can help to reduce overall HIV transmission and infection rates, according to the World Health Organization.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In April last year, I announced that Wales would provide pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for the prevention of HIV through NHS Wales to all those who would benefit from it. This would be provided as part of a three-year monitoring study in order to evaluate the drug’s effectiveness.

“Making PrEP available in Wales is an important part of our wider approach to HIV prevention. I am proud that Wales is able to lead the way in the delivery of PrEP. The initial indications are that PrEP is already beginning to make a difference in the high risk population.

“I have written to Public Health Wales and the dedicated professionals working in our integrated sexual health services to thank them for the considerable efforts made to deliver PrEP to those that would benefit from it.

“There are clear indications that PrEP is appropriately targeted at individuals participating in risky behaviours. Reassuringly, the most recent figures indicate that since PrEP was first made available in July 2017, 386 patients have accessed the preventative treatment and that no one in this cohort has gone on to develop HIV whilst on PrEP.”

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## **Cadw’s Historic Building Grant Scheme reopens for 2018-19**

The Grant scheme has helped save listed buildings at risk, contribute to wider regeneration and deliver a range of community benefits over recent

years and the Culture Minister is calling on all eligible owners and carers of historic community buildings to apply. He said:

“It gives me great pleasure to announce the re-introduction of the Historic Building Grant scheme, which I’m sure will be welcomed by communities across Wales who stand to benefit from further investment in the magnificent listed buildings we have on our doorsteps.

“I was fortunate enough to recently visit both the Guildhall in Llantrisant and Llanelly House which have previously received support through the Grant, and there is no question that the funding is helping turn beautiful and historically significant buildings into real community facilities and local assets.

“Cadw is very clear that this Grant should continue to focus on delivering maximum benefits within communities with bids supported by community buy-in, through crowd funding or similar models, quite rightly looked upon favourably when deciding which projects to support.

“The exact allocation of the grant will depend on how many bids meet the criteria, but rest assured that I’d like to see this scheme support listed buildings in as many of our communities across Wales as possible. Our heritage is unique and should be looked after and celebrated, with this Grant is just another way of Cadw facilitating this.”

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## [Counsel General launches consultation to simplify Welsh law](#)

The proposed legislation will impose obligations on Welsh Ministers and the Counsel General to make laws more accessible and also makes bespoke provision about the interpretation of Welsh legislation.

Speaking ahead of his oral statement the Counsel General said:

“The complexity of the law that applies to Wales is a big problem and steps need to be taken to simplify it and make it more accessible to everyone. My goal is to organise Welsh law into comprehensive Codes organised by the subject areas devolved to Wales.

“I see this as an issue of social justice. It is vital that

citizens understand their rights and responsibilities under the law, they know what the law means and who is responsible for what. That's why I am today launching a public consultation and engagement on the Draft Bill and would like to encourage everyone to get involved and have their say."

A clear, certain and accessible statute book is an economic asset and gives those who wish to do business in Wales a more stable and settled legal framework, helping investment and growth. It also enables public sector bodies and other organisations to more easily understand the legal context within which they operate, and makes law-making more efficient and effective. The proposals would also facilitate use of the law in Welsh.

The Draft Bill is an important milestone in the development of devolved government in Wales and designed to help make Welsh law fit for the future.

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## [New plans to strengthen local government](#)

A Green Paper consultation sets out proposals to explore the possibility of creating larger, stronger councils. The Green Paper sets out for debate, possible options on how this can be achieved – from voluntary mergers, to a phased approach with early adopters merging first, followed by other authorities, to a comprehensive merger programme.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services Alun Davies has spent the past few months visiting local authority leaders across Wales to learn more about the unprecedented challenges they face and how these challenges are impacting on the future sustainability of services.

The proposals aim to ensure councils are able to continue to provide excellent essential services by providing the support, recognition and reward for the crucial role they play in our democracy.

Working together regionally remains crucial. It is central to our model of delivery in education and social services and has been led proactively by local government through the City and Growth Deals. This must continue but it is not enough on its own.

Alun Davies said,

"I believe in public service and the fundamental role local government plays in communities across Wales.

"Wales needs strong, effective, empowered local authorities which

can weather continued austerity and build local democratic structures fit for future generations. I do not believe that our local authorities, as currently constituted, can fully play this role; and I am not alone.

“Councils have been clear that services are wearing down to the point of collapse and there is a general acceptance that things cannot carry on as they are and a general acknowledgement that more money, even if it were available, would not solve the problem.

“I also know local government has made real efforts to change, adapt and invest for the future but I also understand that in the face of UK Government cuts, there are limited options to ensuring the future sustainability of local services. Unless we do something radical in response to these challenges we all recognise, the role of local government will increasingly be one of managed decline.

“The next step must be game-changing. I believe there are many in local government who understand this and I am committed to working with them to secure change. I have already announced proposals to increase participation and improve the democratic process for everyone in Wales, today I am launching a consultation on further re-invigorating the local government landscape.”

The Cabinet Secretary said that it is important as part of this debate to have an agreed template for a future footprint for local government, which any merger must be consistent with. This would ensure that any changes are aligned with the boundaries other public services operate on.

The Green Paper sets out an approach which reflects the thinking of the Williams Commission and feedback from previous consultations to stimulate discussion to arrive at an agreed approach.

Alun Davies continued,

“I recognise there are a number of challenges in creating larger, stronger authorities; but these challenges are not insurmountable. If we do proceed with one of the options for creating larger authorities in the future, we will provide early practical support to local authorities.”

The proposals contained in the Green Paper would be delivered in combination with offering further powers and freedoms to local government, proposals to reinvigorate local democracy, increase transparency, provide more effective scrutiny and better support for elected members. This would form part of a broader approach which includes strengthened regional working in key areas.

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# New employability plan aims to tackle unemployment and economic inactivity

Whilst unemployment in Wales is relatively low at 5.0 per cent and roughly in line with the UK, nearly a quarter of working-age Welsh adults (24.3 per cent) are economically inactive – neither unemployed nor available for work – compared with 22.0 per cent for the UK as a whole. [The plan](#) aims to address this as well as setting out a long term vision to ensure workers of the future have the skills businesses will need.

Launched today by Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan the plan sets out how the Welsh Government will support those furthest from the labour market, the economically inactive and those at risk of redundancy, into work. It brings together and builds on several existing programmes such as Communities for Work, PaCE, Jobs Growth Wales, ReAct, Better Jobs Closer to Home and Lift to help people build the skills and confidence to find and stay in work and to ensure employers can find the skills they require for their businesses to flourish.

The plan, which complements the recently published [Economic Action Plan](#), sets out four main actions for improving employability. They are:

- Providing an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs and takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions.
- Providing support to employers to provide inclusive and fair work whilst underlining their responsibility to up-skill their own workers. This will increase a person's employability and skills with the view of securing in-work progression and reducing a household's risk of living in poverty.
- Responding to current and projected skills gaps to adapt to the changing needs of the market and society.
- Preparing for a radical shift in the world of work to ensure the workforce is ready for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow such as automation, artificial intelligence and robotics

The Minister said:

“Today, Wales has a relatively low level of unemployment, but levels of economic inactivity have remained stubbornly high, despite considerable efforts in this area. There is no doubt that unemployment levels, in particular those not in employment, education or training (NEETS) would have been higher had it not been for significant Welsh Government intervention but we can and need to do more.

“Poverty is still a curse in Welsh society, but employment provides the most sustainable route out of poverty and developing skills is

a vital part of this. The better people's skills, the better their chances are of getting fair, secure and rewarding employment. In addition, the stronger the skills base we have, the more chance we have of attracting new businesses and growing existing ones to increase job opportunities and improve prosperity.

"There are several challenges ahead of us. Our population is ageing, technology is developing ever faster and the political and economic uncertainty around Brexit means there will be disruption to our labour market and economy.

"This employability plan sets out how we intend to face these challenges not to simply weather the storm but emerge from it stronger. We cannot do this alone. It will require a great deal of effort from local authorities, further education and private training providers, the third sector, employers and of course individuals, but together we can seize this opportunity to improve the prosperity of Wales."