

# Final exam results do not yet show full picture, says Education Secretary

Responding to the publication of today's [final examination results for 2016/17](#), Kirsty Williams said:

“It is our national mission that every child, no matter their background, has the opportunity to succeed. Our Pupil Development Grant, which provides extra support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is a vital part of our plans and we’re already seeing the benefits.

“It’s important to have data which you can compare like-for-like, year-on-year, to see where performance issues need to be addressed. But today’s final exam results do not yet provide us with that kind of comparison.

“We have introduced a number of changes to the examination system in Wales over the past year. There have been two new Maths GCSEs, new linear English and Welsh Language GCSEs, and schools are moving away from science BTEC which was failing to properly equip our young people.

“All these changes are linked to raising standards and all were necessary but they mean we’re now essentially dealing with two different sets of data.

“Evidence shows that the Pupil Development Grant is making a difference in breaking the link between poverty and attainment that has dogged our education system. That’s why, earlier this year, I announced plans to extend the grant and why I will continue to do everything within my power to make sure we’re reaching the learners that need this invaluable support.”

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## Minister sets out priorities for employability and skills

She told delegates:

“I am very excited about this brief and I am committed to delivering a strong employability and skills agenda. The Cross-Welsh Government work on employability is particularly exciting as we maximise opportunities to work together in order to make a real difference to people’s lives.

“The Welsh Government clearly has a key role in supporting the employability of people across Wales and we should be proud of the fact that we have seen significant improvements in the employment rate in Wales over recent years. But we still have work to do to support those who are economically inactive, and those in insecure employment.

“Employability is not just about jobs and skills. It is about getting every aspect of Government policy – education, health, housing and communities – working together to support people into sustainable jobs.

“In order to support long-term prosperity, we need to do things differently and, to do different things. Employability and Skills has been identified as one of our key priorities to help us build the highly skilled and productive workforce of the future.

“I am determined to ensure we focus on building the skills employers need to flourish, skills people need to gain meaningful employment to support themselves and skills that will equip people to meet the challenges of the future.”

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## **Plans for 19 new health and care centres across Wales announced by Vaughan Gething**

Funding of up to £68 million has been identified for the centres. Construction will be subject to the agreement of successful business cases from the local health boards, and the expectation is that all schemes will be delivered by 2021.

This is the biggest targeted investment in primary and community care infrastructure by Welsh Government.

The pipeline of facilities is intended to improve access to a range of health and social care services closer to people’s homes. The provision of a new

generation of integrated health and care centres is a key commitment in Taking Wales Forward.

The pipeline of projects seeks to invest in a number of ways, and includes the refurbishment and redevelopment of existing sites, as well as a number of new build developments.

A key theme of the pipeline is integration and health boards are looking to work with a range of delivery partners, including local authorities, housing associations and the third sector, to bring together a range of public services into community hubs.

The schemes include the following :

### **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board**

Penclawdd Health Centre  
Murton Community Clinic  
Bridgend Town Centre Primary Care Centre  
Swansea Wellness Centre

### **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**

Tredegar Health and Wellbeing Centre  
Newport East Resource Centre

### **Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**

Central Denbighshire Clinic / Hospital Redevelopment  
Waunfawr Primary Care Centre

### **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**

Maelfa Health Centre Hub  
Cogan Hub Development  
Pentyrch Surgery

### **Cwm Taf University Health Board**

Tonypandy Health Centre  
Dewi Sant Phase 2 development  
Mountain Ash Primary Care Centre

### **Hywel Dda University Health Board**

Aberaeron Integrated Care Centre  
Fishguard Health Centre  
Cross Hands Integrated Care Centre

### **Powys Teaching Health Board**

Machynlleth – reconfiguration and extension to create a primary and community

care hub  
Llanfair Caereinion Primary Care Centre

Vaughan Gething said:

“People in the 21st Century expect to be treated in modern, advanced health care centres that deliver a wide range of services all under one roof. We agree and by targeting investment in this way it is hoped that opportunities for delivering service change can be delivered upon.

“We’re funding the future of healthcare in Wales and the pipeline of projects I’m announcing today will make a significant difference to the care people receive closer to home in their communities.”

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## People in residential care to keep even more of their money

The move is part of the Welsh Government’s Programme for Government commitment to increase the capital limit used by local authorities who charge for residential care from £24,000 to £50,000 during the current Assembly term.

The increase is being delivered in a phased approach, which commenced from April 2017 when the limit in relation to residential care was increased to £30,000.

The capital limit determines whether a person pays for the full cost of their residential care, or whether they receive financial support towards the cost from their local authority.

There are up to 4,000 care home residents who pay for the full cost of their care. Increasing the capital limit to £50,000 has the potential to benefit a significant number of these, depending upon the value of the capital they hold.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The Welsh Government is committed to supporting older people, and those requiring care, to live the lives they want to lead.

“We promised to more than double the capital people can keep when in residential care – freeing up more of people’s money for them to use as they wish.

“We are now well on our way to delivering that pledge to the people of Wales. We know that well over 400 people are already benefiting from the increase in the limit, and we expect this to rise substantially when the limit is increased to £50,000.”

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## [Economy Secretary in Qatar to build trade links ahead of Cardiff to Doha flights](#)

To further strengthen Wales’s relationship with Qatar, the Economy Secretary is attending a Welsh Government business briefing being run in conjunction with the British Embassy, Qatar Airways and Cardiff Airport and in parallel with the British Festival Qatar 2017.

The visit is part of the Welsh Government’s ongoing work to help businesses in both Wales and Qatar capitalise on the trading and export opportunities associated with the launch of new daily, direct flights between Cardiff and Doha, which will begin in May.

The Economy Secretary said:

“This is my first visit to Qatar and I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the business community here about all Wales has to offer.

“Wales is an outward facing and welcoming nation, and we are proud of our strong record of welcoming high profile overseas investors and exporting quality goods all over the world.

“The launch of daily direct flights between Doha and Cardiff next year, along with the direct flights already operated between Manchester and Doha which serve the North Wales economy, offers us huge opportunities to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

“I am optimistic that this visit, along with the trade missions that have already taken place, will help us to build new trade links, increase export levels and attract more inward investment opportunities in Wales, and I look forward to businesses in both our countries working closely and productively together in the months and years ahead.”

The British Ambassador to Qatar, Mr Ajay Sharma, said:

"I am delighted to welcome Mr Skates, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, to Doha to further strengthen the links between Wales and Qatar. The UK-Qatar relationship is extremely strong, and the new flights between Doha and Cardiff will grow that relationship further. It is important that all areas of the UK benefit from engagement with Qatar. I am sure that this visit will make a real difference to this agenda."

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Ehab Amin said:

"We very much looking forward to the launch of our direct daily service to the Welsh capital next year, our first regular direct flight linking Wales and South-West England to our global hub in Doha. Cardiff is a strategically important destination for Qatar Airways, and the new route will most certainly benefit both leisure and business travelers by connecting passengers to our expanding global network of more than 150 destinations.

"For Welsh businesses in particular, this new route will be extremely beneficial, as it will enhance investment and export opportunities by providing businesses with new links to markets around the world using our award-winning airline."

Roger Lewis, Chairman of Cardiff Airport, stated:

"The new daily Qatar Airways service represents a pivotal moment for Cardiff Airport. The far reaching consequences of these flights for passengers and businesses across Wales and the South West of England are transformational.

"The service will bolster the critically important relationship between Qatar, Wales and the United Kingdom which is being substantially strengthened. I am confident Qatari businesses will make the most of the fantastic opportunities to develop trade and investment in the region, and look forward to welcoming more visitors through our airport from next May."