

Health Secretary to connect with NHS staff in north Wales

Health Service employees in the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust and Public Health Wales staff in North East Wales are the second group of staff to get an opportunity to ask Mr Gething questions about the health service at a Cabinet Connect event.

The Q&A session will be held at the Wrexham Medical Institute.

Vaughan Gething said:

“One of the greatest things about being Wales’ health secretary is being able to meet NHS staff across the length and breadth of Wales on a weekly basis. Their dedication and commitment to providing often life-saving healthcare never ceases to amaze me.

“I’m really pleased to be in north Wales today to give frontline staff the opportunity to meet me, ask me questions and discuss the issues in the health service that are important to them.

“Our NHS staff simply wouldn’t function without our staff. The Welsh Government’s commitment to working with them is clear. We need to continue working together to ensure we develop the NHS to meet the needs of people both now and in the years to come.”

Cabinet Connect builds on the success of the Carwyn Connect events, which the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones has used to meet and get the views of people across Wales.

Dr Peter Higson, Chairman of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board said:

“We are delighted to welcome the Cabinet Secretary to Wrexham for this event. The demands on the NHS are greater than they have ever been and every day our staff are giving their all to care for the people of North Wales.

“Having the Cabinet Secretary take the time to come and meet staff face to face in this way shows that their efforts are recognised and appreciated at the highest level, and I am sure that colleagues will welcome the opportunity to put their questions to Mr Gething.”

'Education saved my life': Valleys mum wins award after overcoming troubled past

After being placed in a women's refuge, 33-year-old mother-of-three Laura Harris moved to Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taff. She knew no-one in the area so decided to enrol in college at Coleg y Cymoedd and began her learning journey in 2015.

Laura started with an Access to Humanities course and progressed onto Level 3 Business & Administration. Determined to succeed, Laura excelled at her studies, achieving distinctions in her coursework.

Laura has received the Overall Learner of the Year as well as the Health and Wellbeing category at this year's Inspire! Awards in recognition of her transformation into a confident and successful student progressing to university, having secured a place to study events management at the University of South Wales in September.

Mum to Tyler, 15, and 10-year-old twin girls, Laura said:

"I had a troubled childhood. I didn't go to school and had a difficult relationship with my mother. It was no surprise when I was made homeless and ended up walking the streets of Swansea trying to find shelter at 14 years old.

"I used drugs to escape from my life but they made me psychotic and frightened. I got pregnant at 17 and was given my own property and came off drugs and started to turn my life around. I met my partner and all was alright until he became controlling.

"I was placed in a women's refuge and was transferred to Aberdare, an area where I knew no-one but I was safe. I wanted to get an education to help my son with his school work. I began at Coleg y Cymoedd and have never looked back.

"I relish learning and nothing feels more rewarding than the pride I feel achieving distinctions in my work. I have been accepted to university next academic year which is something I thought I would never ever do."

The Inspire! Awards are hosted each year ahead of Adult Learners' Week to celebrate the achievements of outstanding learners in Wales who have shown exceptional passion, commitment and drive for learning; often in the face of difficult circumstances, as well as employers who champion learning in the workplace.

Organised by Learning and Work Institute Wales with the financial backing of the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund, this year's Adult Learners' Week runs from 19–25 June and celebrates lifelong learning; whether work-based, as part of a community education course, at college, university or online.

Now celebrating its 26th year, it aims to promote the range of courses available to adult learners; from computing and childcare to business and languages.

Laura has used her challenging background to help others. As a result of the trauma of her past life, Laura suffers panic attacks. As part of a theatre workshop Laura devised a DVD which features her experiences on relationships and domestic violence. The DVD was rolled out across schools and colleges in Rhondda Cynon Taff and won a National Union of Students Enterprise award in 2016.

Laura Wilson, welfare officer at Coleg y Cymoedd, nominated Laura for the Inspire! Awards. She says:

“Laura is definitely inspiring others through her youth work. Laura sees the college as her family. It's such a small and friendly campus, she's got to know lots of people here and that's helped increase her confidence.”

Laura Harris adds:

“My message to anyone who suffers from mental health, alcohol and drug problems like I did is that the answer is education. It has transformed my life and that feels amazing.”

“My mum has come back into my life. She's really proud of me. She's amazed by the transformation in me and I now feel complete.”

“I'm overwhelmed at winning this award, I'm excited and I'm proud. I've proved to myself and others that I can do it.”

Commenting on the Inspire! Awards, Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, said:

“Laura's story captures the true spirit of the Inspire! Awards, proving how empowering education can be, no matter your age or background. It is learners like her that provide an excellent example for others, overcoming the obstacles and difficulties in their own lives to inspire potential adult learners across Wales. I would like to congratulate her and all the other winners on their outstanding achievements.”

“We hope that Adult Learners’ Week will encourage adults to find out more about improving their skills and enhancing their career options by taking part in the range of free events happening across Wales. Adults can also access the Skills Gateway to get careers advice and guidance, whether they want to improve their skills and employability, access training, or get back into work.”

David Hagendyk, Director of Learning and Work Institute Wales, said:

“The Inspire! Awards show how learning can really change lives. We hope people feel empowered by the winners’ stories and make the most of Adult Learners’ Week to get involved in local opportunities and seize the moment – whether you are stuck in a rut, want to make a change or brush up on your skills, Adult Learners’ Week could be just the boost you need to help improve your current situation through learning.”

Other winners include Arthur J Gallagher, who won the Small Employer category, Stuart Hughes, who won the Into Work category, Nina Miklaszewicz, winner of the Progression category, Nutica Neascu, winner of the Family Learning Individual category, Jimama Ansumana, winner of the Young Adult category, Christopher Joyce, winner of the Life or Career Change Category, Ceredigion Council, winner of the Large Business category, Treorchy Primary, winner of the Family Learning Project category, and 3Gs Only Men Allowed, winners of the Community Project category.

For more information on Adult Learners’ Week, go to the Welsh Government’s [Skills Gateway for Adults](#) (external link), call 0800 028 4844 or follow @skillsgatewaycw.

[Appointments to new teacher training accreditation board announced](#)

The Education Workforce Council: Teacher Education Accreditation Committee, which will be known as ‘the board’, will accredit individual Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes.

The newly appointed Chair is Professor John Furlong, Emeritus Professor of Education, Oxford University Department of Education, and Emeritus Fellow of Green Templeton College, Oxford.

Professor Olwen Mcnamara, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Manchester and Dr Aine Lawlor, former CEO of the Teaching Council Ireland

will be Deputy Chairs. These appointments will run from 12 June 2017 to 31 May 2022.

The Welsh Government has announced new rules for the courses that train teachers as part of the drive to attract the best talent to the profession. The changes for ITE include strengthening how schools and universities work together and increasing the role of research.

The latest accreditation criteria are part of the Welsh Government's national mission to reform education and include:

- an increased role for schools
- a clearer role for universities
- structured opportunities to link school and university learning
- a greater emphasis on research.

The changes build on the new professional teaching and leadership standards and link to the wider education reforms taking place in Wales. Pivotal to success is this very different approach to the professional education of the teaching workforce.

Kirsty Williams said:

"I am delighted to announce Professor John Furlong as Chair and Professor Olwen Mcnamara and Dr Aine Lawlor as Deputy Chairs of the new Teacher Education Accreditation Committee.

"This new board will allow more specific consideration of how ITE programmes will raise the quality of provision – attracting the right people with the right qualifications and an aptitude for teaching, to enter the profession.

"These changes and the new accreditation standards are part of our national mission to raise the standards and standing of the profession."

The [EWC is currently recruiting](#) (external link) members to join the Board.

Busy Easter gives Industry confidence boost for the summer

37% of businesses reported that they had seen an increase in visitors with 42% reporting the same level of visitors as in 2016. Attractions and activity operators performed particularly well, with 57% welcoming more visitors than Easter last year.

Caravan and campsite operators also fared well, with 46% seeing a boost in the number of visitors compared to the same period in 2016.

Most sectors have taken more profits so far in 2017, compared with the same period last year. Overall, 34% of businesses reported seeing higher profits, with 41% reporting the same as last year.

With a sound Easter as a good foundation for the year, the summer looks to be bright, with 87% of businesses expecting to see more or the same level of visitors as last year during the peak season.

Most (85%) respondents are confident about how their business will perform over the summer. This has been helped with many reporting an increase in advance bookings. Some serviced sector accommodation reported that they were fully booked, with advance bookings taking over the last minute booking trend of recent years.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“I’m delighted that the industry are feeling confident for the season ahead and that the combination of fine weather and a later Easter boosted efforts to attract visitors to Wales and resulted in an increase in visitors during Easter this year. An increase in advance bookings also gives the industry confidence for the months ahead and shows that people are committing to their holiday in Wales sooner than in previous years. The tourism industry in Wales is in a strong position. In 2016 the total number of visits to Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – was 15% up – which builds on the previous successful years. We will continue with our campaign work for the summer as we celebrate Wales’ Year of Legends.”

[First Minister opens Eastern Bay link road](#)

The dual carriageway, which is named after the late engineer and planner, Ewart Parkinson, will improve links to Cardiff Bay, reducing journey times and helping to ease congestion in the city centre.

Ffordd Ewart Parkinson will also boost the local economy by improving access to the Central Cardiff Enterprise Zone and enhancing connectivity across the wider city region.

The road, which was completed by Dawnus Ferroviaal Agroman on time and within

budget, provided 13 apprenticeships, 2 work experience placements and jobs for 9 graduates and 27 people who were previously long-term unemployed.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I am delighted to officially open Ffordd Ewart Parkinson, which will provide a major boost to both Cardiff city centre and the Bay. Commuters will benefit from a shorter route and reduced journey times, while local residents will see reduced traffic and disruption in their neighbourhood.

“Improving infrastructure and transport links, reducing journey times and creating jobs has been a long term commitment for my government and this major project is another example of how we are delivering on those promises.”

Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport at Cardiff Council, said:

“It is wonderful to see the first phase of the Eastern Bay link road being officially opened this week.

“The new road will greatly improve journey times, ease congestion and connections for motorists and will be a great boost to Cardiff and Cardiff Bay.”