

Veterinary surgeons receive training to provide Export Health Certificates post-Brexit

If the UK crashes out of the European Union without a deal Export Health Certificates (EHC) will be required to export produce of animal origin from Wales to the EU.

This will result in a significant increase in the need for EHC certification capability and capacity in Wales.

£96,000 from the £50 million EU Transition fund was announced last September to support the need for Export Health Certification and is an example of how the Welsh Government is helping the sector prepare for Brexit.

Veterinary surgeons certifying EHCs must receive specific training and authorisation. Usually the training is paid for by the veterinarian undertaking the course, which represents a disincentive to participate.

For this reason a scheme to support the additional training required for a minimum of 80 Veterinary surgeons from across Wales was launched on 22 January, with more than expected to sign-up before training ends at the end of February.

The scheme is being administered by the Animal and Plant Health Agency on behalf of the Welsh Government and in collaboration with Veterinary Delivery Partners Iechyd Da and Menter a Busnes.

Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, said:

“I am pleased we have been able to support the veterinary sector through our EU Transition Fund. Veterinary surgeons have already begun receiving extra training to provide Export Health Certificates and this funding is helping to address the significant risk to the export of animal produce from Wales post-Brexit.

“This is yet another example of how, we as a Government, are supporting our industries prepare for Brexit and the challenges ahead.

“It is possible— if a no deal is taken off the table this extra capacity will not be required but we must prepare for all eventualities. However, the training would not have been wasted as the skills are transferable and would strengthen the important certification role of the veterinary profession in Wales.”

Veterinary surgeon and representative of Iechyd Da, Ifan Lloyd said:

“This Welsh Government support package offers practicing vets in Wales the opportunity to undertake additional training to obtain the necessary qualifications to carry out animal product export certification.

“This is a key initiative to ensure the veterinary profession in Wales is in a state of preparedness in the event of a no deal Brexit and that exporters have easy access to qualified vets to undertake their certification requirements.”

“We have always been clear a no deal Brexit is not an option for Wales’ food industry. Crashing out of the European Union could decimate economies and must be avoided at all costs. Our preference would be a ‘softer’ Brexit – one that allows us to stay in a customs union and a single market.

“With no new ideas and red lines firmly still in place, the UK Government is simply running down the clock in a vain hope that their deal will pass. They must take decisive action now and act on the majority will of Parliament to rule out no deal.”

[Developing a new international strategy for Wales](#)

This will be the key message at a reception held at the Senedd.

Speaking at one of her first engagements as the new Minister for International Relations Eluned Morgan will say:

“At this crucial moment when the relationship between Wales and the rest of the world will be determined – we are keen in the Welsh Government to send a message out loud and clear that whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations – we in Wales will not be turning back on the world and in particular on our nearest and closest neighbours in the European Union.”

The Minister will emphasise:

“Over the next few months the Welsh Government will reach out to the public and in particular those engaged in international roles to ask them to help shape the image and message that Wales should be presenting to the world. The Government is anxious to build on the strong international links that have been developed over past decades which will help to enrich the country economically socially and culturally.”

Eluned Morgan will explain to the international gathering that Wales is the most stable place politically to invest in the UK, with the Westminster Parliament in London in chaos, Scotland threatening independence and Northern Ireland still without a sitting Assembly.

The International Strategy will be founded on a clear set of values which will help to present Wales' face internationally – including a commitment to sustainability and future generations, the promotion of the principles of Fair Work and a fundamental belief in the fact that we will achieve more to tackle some of the major challenges of our age -digital technology, tackling poverty and inequality, taking on environmental challenges and climate change, through working together across territorial boundaries.

Jump in part-time students accessing support following introduction of most generous support package in the UK

The statistics report on the new student support system for the first time, also showing a 58% increase in the number of postgraduates supported. Welsh post-grads were eligible for dedicated bursaries and support from Welsh universities this year, thanks to Welsh Government funding. Means-tested grants and loans will be introduced from September.

There is no Government-backed living costs grant funding for part-time undergraduates or post-graduate students elsewhere in the UK. Last year, the Education Minister set a goal of a 10% increase in the number of Welsh post-graduate students by the end of this Government's term.

The Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, said:

“This is fantastic news and a real vote of confidence in our student support package, the first of its kind in the UK or Europe.

“We have always said that high living costs are the main barrier for students when thinking about university. Our package of support

was specifically designed to address these concerns, making it easier for people to study part-time, especially if they have work or family commitments.

“Our radical approach to supporting part-time study is essential to improving social mobility, employment outcomes, access to the professions and delivering on our commitment to lifelong learning.”

Louise Casella, Director of The Open University in Wales, said:

“The OU in Wales saw a 49% increase in our October student recruitment last year. This represents hundreds more people embarking on learning that will transform the lives of their families and communities. We’ve had a 67% increase in students from Wales’ most economically disadvantaged areas, a 57% increase in disabled students and a 30% increase in BME learners.

“I am pleased the Welsh Government is highlighting the impact the new funding system is having on part-time study in Wales. With maintenance grants now available for part-time distance learners as well, flexible study has never been more affordable. This is helping The OU in Wales make studying for a degree a reality for those who may not have considered it in the past.”

Julie Lydon, Chair of Universities Wales, said:

“We are delighted to see this increase in the number of students choosing to study part-time in Wales, clearly demonstrating that the new student support and higher education funding package in Wales is working.

“In the coming decade, Wales will face many challenges from the changing workplace and advancements in technology. These changes will mean that Wales will need a more highly skilled workforce. Flexible learning, such as part-time study, will play a key role in preparing the people, places and businesses of Wales for the future.

“This increase in part-time and postgraduate study shows that, with the new student support and higher education funding package in Wales, we are on the right path to providing people of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to benefit from higher education.”

Denbighshire Flying Start celebrates new transport funding

The funds will play an important role in providing transport for those living in the rural county, where families can have limited access to public transport. The money will be used towards purchasing an eight seater MPV.

The MPV will help support:

- Families living in rural areas who are entitled to Outreach assistance in accessing group sessions.
- Support families with children who have additional learning needs, where public transport may not be accessible.
- Midwifery staff will be able to take groups of mums-to-be on a tour of the local maternity unit.

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, said:

“The additional funding will make a positive difference to families in Denbighshire and those delivering Flying Start services. The Flying Start programme remains an integral part in tackling poverty and we want to ensure that there are no barriers for communities in accessing these vital services.”

Cllr Huw Hilditch-Roberts, lead member for Education, Children and Young People, said:

“I welcome this funding which will help increase accessibility to the Flying Start Programme.

“Flying Start is part of the Welsh Government’s Early Years Programme for families living within disadvantaged areas of Wales, specifically with children under 4 years of age.

“This will allow us to support families within the Flying Start areas in Denbighshire and those eligible to access our outreach provision to access groups and activities.

“This is part of our work to make our communities more resilient and provide parents with the right support so their children get the best start in life.”

Latest school categorisation results published

The National School Categorisation System, introduced in 2014, places schools into one of four colour-coded support categories to demonstrate the level of support they need – green, yellow, amber and red.

There are now more schools in the green and yellow categories when compared to last year. Green schools require just four days of support and yellow schools receive up to 10 days of support.

Last year a change was made to the factors that decide a school's category. There is now a much broader assessment that considers a wider variety of information including wellbeing and the quality of teaching and learning, rather than just looking at areas such as performance, including GCSE results.

The purpose of including a broader and more sophisticated range of factors is to understand the kind of support needed by a school and to give parents a better picture of how a school is performing.

In summary:

- 88.4 per cent of primary schools and 69.4 per cent of secondary schools are now in the green and yellow categories. This increase from last year continues the upward trend since 2015.
- There has been a rise in the number of schools in the green category – those schools requiring least support – by 6.2 percentage points to 41.6 per cent.
- The proportion of red schools – those identified as needing most support – is around the same as last year (a small decrease on 0.1 per cent) in the primary sector. In the secondary sector, this has decreased by 1.8 percentage points.
- 52.5 per cent of special schools have been categorised as green, and needing less support, with no schools categorised as red and in need of most support.

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams said:

“I’m pleased to see that even more of our schools are now in the green and yellow categories, continuing on with the upward trend we have seen over the past few years.

“These schools have a key role to play in supporting other schools to improve by sharing their expertise, skills and good practice.

“The system has become more sophisticated over time and now allows for a much broader range of factors about a school’s ability to improve to be taken into account – leading to a tailored programme

of support and intervention which meets the needs of all pupils.”