

National online safety action plan for children and young people to be created – Kirsty Williams

The plan will provide a strategic overview of how the Welsh Government will work with partners to continue to improve online safety support in Wales. The plan will build on the extensive programme already underway in schools to support young people to stay safe online.

The latest figures from the National Survey of Wales show 95% of children aged 7 to 15 used the internet at home and the device most commonly used by these children was a tablet or similar (71%).

Over the last two and a half years, the Welsh Government has strengthened online safety practice in education with:

- 85% of all schools have taken up the 360 degree Safe Cymru tool, which allows schools to check their current online safety policies and provision against national standards and gives practical suggestions to improve and enhance online safety.
- Created the Online Safety Zone on Hwb, the digital learning platform for schools in Wales that can be accessed by teachers, parents and learners.
- Published the 'Online Safety Resource for Wales', with practical resources and lesson plans to support schools in their delivery of online safety in the classroom.
- Online safety training sessions have been delivered across all local authorities. Training approximately 2,300 educational professionals, these have provided new skills for teachers and governors in preparing them to deal with issues young people may encounter online.
- In September 2016, we published the Digital Competence Framework, the first element of the new curriculum to be introduced across Wales. This includes a Citizenship Strand that focuses on developing and applying critical thinking skills and strategies. It includes specific elements focused on online behaviour, cyberbullying together with health and well-being.

Kirsty Williams said:

"I am fully committed to keeping our children and young people safe online. It is our responsibility, as a society, to equip our young people with the skills to be able to think critically and navigate the digital world in a safe and responsible way.

"That is why we have a range of policies in place to help us achieve this, from providing training for teachers and governors to raise their awareness of the issues, teaching new skills to our pupils and providing resources to our schools and parents.

“While we are delivering an extensive programme of online safety activities, there is always scope for more. That is why I am commissioning a national online safety action plan for children and young people. This will provide a strategic overview of how we will continue to enhance online safety support in Wales.”

High growth FinTech firm Delio expands and set to create 30 jobs with Welsh Government support

Delio – founded by Gareth Lewis and David Newman in 2015 – has developed a Configurable, white label platform for financial institutions that helps distribute deal flow and connect high net worth clients with global private market investment opportunities.

The Welsh Government is providing £200,000 repayable business finance that will take the business to the next level, creating 30 new jobs and safeguarding a further seven.

The investment and increase in headcount is essential for Delio to achieve its three-year growth plan and will speed up its expansion plans enabling the business to exploit its IP via a blue chip financial and professional services client base.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Financial Technology is a fast-growth areas for the Welsh economy and one which we are keen to support and develop. Our thriving tech ecosystem with its growing supply chain, combined with our entrepreneurial universities, provide a firm foundation for these sectors to thrive.

“Delio has already been noted for its high growth potential and joins a growing number of emerging, smart Welsh companies that are clearly making their mark in this market. I am pleased Welsh Government funding will support Delio’s expansion plans.”

Delio creates private asset platforms for financial services institutions enabling them to appeal to the next generation of high net wealth investors. The bespoke platforms allow their high net worth clients, potential clients and advisors to share, search and access private client opportunities directly using a common platform.

It was born out of the changing needs of today's wealth creators who are increasingly looking to invest directly in opportunities across private equity and debt, social impact and real estate; both direct and via funds. Previously, the offerings of financial institutions were not evolving to accommodate this shift in needs and this is where Delio steps in.

Delio co-founder Gareth Lewis said:

"Our solution helps everyone – from family offices through to global banks – offer more to those seeking to invest directly in private equity, debt, real estate and other asset classes. It provides markets for a range of uses – platforms can connect together multiple institutions on an individual basis so deal flow can be shared both internally and with external partners.

"It can not only be used to improve distribution to existing networks but also to reach new investors and sources of deal flow by sharing opportunities with total control and flexibility."

As well as working with clients in the UK and Europe, Delio is currently in discussions with two of the UK's major financial institutions about rolling out their offering across the banking groups.

In just over a year Delio, which has offices in London, has extended its customer base into Europe – opening an office in Brussels and working on projects across Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg and Australia.

The company was assisted with the grant application process by Mike Fenwick director of grants at professional advisory firm Broomfield & Alexander.

Commenting Mike said:

"Delio is a great example of a financial technology business with significant growth potential and it is great news that the company has decided to grow its operations in Wales with support from the Welsh Government. I wish Gareth and the team every success."

Plans put forward to develop teachers' leadership skills – Kirsty Williams

Updating Assembly Members on plans for a new National Academy for Educational Leadership, Kirsty Williams set out how the new organisation will be arms length from the Welsh Government with the ambition of preparing all leaders

in the Welsh education system with the right skills and knowledge to benefit pupils.

The former chief inspector for Estyn Ann Keane has been working with a range of experts to look at how the academy can be established. Her 'shadow board' has made a range of recommendations, including:

- Allowing fair access for teachers to develop their leadership skills.
- Using the latest evidence and research on how leadership in schools makes a difference.
- Developing current leaders in schools while identifying future leaders.

Kirsty Williams said:

"The quality of our education system cannot exceed the quality of our teachers and leadership is central to this.

"Our challenge, as noted by the OECD, is to ensure a national approach to leadership, and make it a prime driver of our education reforms.

"The evidence shows leaders in our school can make a huge difference. I want us to have the right leaders with the right skills to raise standards and set the highest expectations for all our young people.

"I have instructed officials to start scoping the timescale and resources needed to establish the Academy by spring 2018 at the latest. I expect this to be an agile organisation with a small strategic board and led by a chief executive.

"I want to thank Ann Keane for her work as we set up the academy. In a short space of time Ann and shadow board have made good progress on this issue."

Ann Keane said:

"I am very pleased that the Cabinet Secretary has accepted the recommendations of the shadow board. They are the result not only of our deliberations but of engagement with head teachers and other leaders in the education sector across Wales and an understanding of what happens in other countries.

"We will be sharing more detailed proposals for the Academy in meetings around Wales over the next few weeks to make sure that what is planned for the Academy enables equity of access to high-quality leadership development for leaders and aspiring leaders who work in education sectors in Wales, for the ultimate benefit of learners.

“The Education Secretary wants the academy up and running by 2018. The body is part of a range of Welsh Government reforms including changes to initial teacher training, proposals to revamp teaching standards and new accreditation criteria for initial teacher training providers.”

Law to improve and protect the health of the nation is passed

Welcoming the passing of the Bill, Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans said:

“This is a landmark day for public health in Wales. The Public Health (Wales) Bill is a radical piece of legislation which will improve and protect the health and wellbeing of the nation.

“Once law, the Bill will make a real difference to people in Wales. Children will be protected from the harms of second hand smoke and the dangers of intimate piercing; better planning of public toilet provision should mean older people, people with disabilities, and people caring for young children won’t be put off leaving the house; while anybody undergoing a special procedure will be able to have confidence that the person carrying it out has safe working practices.

“All of us will benefit from the requirements on public bodies to assess how their decisions will affect people’s physical and mental health, and the move to make the planning of pharmacy services more responsive to the needs of communities.

“I would like to thank all of the partners who worked with us to develop the Bill, and Assembly Members, whose constructive scrutiny has strengthened the final legislation. This radical new law will have a significant, lasting positive impact on health in Wales.”

Radical Welsh law will improve the

health of the nation

Assembly Members will vote for the final time on the Public Health (Wales) Bill this afternoon.

The Bill aims to protect young people's health through banning smoking in school grounds, public playgrounds, and the outdoor areas of registered childcare settings, as well as in hospital grounds. It prohibits tobacco and nicotine products from being handed over to under 18s by home delivery or collection services and creates a national register of retailers of tobacco and nicotine products.

It will also protect health and wellbeing through:

- Creating a mandatory licensing scheme for 'special procedures', namely acupuncture, body piercing, electrolysis and tattooing, and prohibiting the intimate piercing of anybody under the age of 18.
- Placing a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy, including an assessment of the need for toilets for public use and details of how that need will be met.
- Requiring public bodies in Wales to assess how their decisions will affect people's physical and mental health.
- Making the planning of pharmacy services more responsive to the needs of their local community.
- Placing a duty on the Welsh Government to produce a national strategy on preventing and reducing obesity.

Speaking ahead of the debate, Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans said:

"The Public Health (Wales) Bill is the latest in a long line of measures the Welsh Government has introduced to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales. If passed, it will create the conditions which enable people to live healthy lives and will protect them from preventable harm.

"It has a particular focus on promoting children and young people's health. Proposals such as the ban on smoking in school grounds, childcare settings, and playgrounds are intended to prevent children from being exposed to smoking behaviours, making it less likely that they'll take up smoking themselves.

"Today is an opportunity for us to pass a radical Welsh law that will meet the needs of people in Wales. I look forward to the vote later today."

Chief Medical Officer, Dr Frank Atherton said:

“This Bill will help to keep pace with emerging public health concerns. In recent years, body piercing and tattooing have become increasingly popular. This Bill will ensure that only those with safe working practices can carry out these procedures.

“As a result of scrutiny by the National Assembly, the Bill will also provide a legislative focus for our work to tackle the major public health challenge of obesity.”