

NHS pay awards show commitment to living wage

More than 7,000 of the lowest paid employees will see an uplift to £8.45 an hour, in line with the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage.

In addition to the Living Wage uprating, other salary increases from 1 April for 2017-18 are:

- A 1% consolidated pay increase for all Agenda for Change staff in NHS Wales;
- A 1% increase for salaried doctors and dentists;
- A 1% increase will be applied to the value of Clinical Excellence Awards;
- A 1% increase will be applied to the value of Commitment Awards;
- A 1% increase to the value of the GP trainers' grant;
- A 1% increase for independent contractor General Medical Practitioners and General Dental Practitioners;
- A 1% salary increase for NHS Senior Executives, their first pay award since 2009.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"I remain committed to tackling the issue of low pay in Wales and will ensure the lowest earners in NHS Wales are paid a fair salary, as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation.

"I am therefore implementing the uplift to the Living Wage – to £8.45 an hour – for all directly employed NHS staff from 1 April 2017.

"I am pleased that I am able to award pay increases in line with the independent pay review bodies' pay recommendations and to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to staff working in the NHS in Wales. I am also committed to working in Social Partnership with employers and those representing NHS staff to consider the way forward on the other issues the pay review bodies raised."

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething has accepted recommendations on pay by both the NHS Pay Review Body and the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration.

Quarter of a billion pound boost for Wales' rural communities

Lesley Griffiths today confirmed she is fully committing the remaining tranche of funding under the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020.

The funding, a combination of Welsh Government and EU money, is an investment in key areas that will help rural communities to be more resilient during the post-EU transition period. It will provide Wales' farmers, food producers, landowners and others with a certain degree of assurance that they can start to make future plans and shape their business operations accordingly.

Clarity on future funding arrangements was a key issue raised during a number of Brexit Round Table meetings and workshops, involving representatives from across the Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio, set up by the Cabinet Secretary immediately after the outcome of the EU referendum.

Today's announcement means a wide range of important schemes can now open including Farm Business Grant, Glastir Advanced, Food Business Investment Scheme, Co-operation and Supply Chain Development, Glastir Woodland Creation and Rural Community Development Fund.

The Cabinet Secretary made the decision to fully commit the remaining EU element of the funding, totalling £126.3m, after the UK Government guaranteed funding for all projects signed before the UK leaves the EU. Previously, the Chancellor only guaranteed to finance projects signed before the 2016 Autumn Statement. The Welsh Government will also provide £96.4m.

The Cabinet Secretary's Round Table group, comprising representatives from across the portfolio, reconvened yesterday. In addition, a series of cross-sector stakeholder workshops, involving more than one hundred people have taken place at different locations across Wales between August and October 2016.

The Round Table meetings and workshops have enabled representatives from across the Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio to look at the implications of Brexit in a joined-up way, in particular the key risks, opportunities, and possible ways forward.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Tomorrow promises to be a significant day for Wales and the UK, when the prospect of a future outside the EU starts to become very much a reality. It also signals the official start of a period of uncertainty for all involved in Wales' rural communities. We still don't know what the future landscape will look like but we are pressing the UK Government to honour the commitment made during the referendum campaign that we will not lose out on money we would

otherwise have received from the EU.

“I am pleased to confirm, therefore, we are committing the entirety of the remaining funding under the RDP, worth nearly a quarter of a billion pounds. I hope this provides reassurance to Wales’ rural communities who have benefited greatly from the wide range of programmes under the RDP.

“Following the result of the EU referendum, I was keen to bring together representatives from across my portfolio to discuss in detail the risks and opportunities that Brexit presents. The contribution by all involved has been very positive and there is a real commitment from them to work together.

“This engagement underlines the strength of the links that exist in Wales between areas like agriculture, communities and the wider environment. The discussions that have taken place have been invaluable in identifying how we should plan for a future outside the EU.”

Full details of upcoming scheme windows under the [RDP](#) will be available on the Welsh Government website in due course.

[Minister launches hunt for 2017 Apprenticeship Awards Cymru stars](#)

The Minister selected Crimewatch Alarms Ltd and CW Electrical, a Newport-based electrical contractor and security and fire alarms specialist, as a shining example of what can be achieved by a business that invests in apprenticeships to develop a highly skilled workforce.

She’s hoping that many similar companies across Wales will apply for this year’s coveted awards, which are launched by the Welsh Government in partnership with the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW). The awards are sponsored by Pearson PLC and supported by media partner, Media Wales.

Application forms are available to download from the [NTfW’s website](#) (external link) and the closing date is **noon on June 23, 2017**.

Finalists in 11 categories will be shortlisted for awards, which will be presented at a high-profile ceremony to be held at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport on October 20, 2017.

Crimewatch Alarms Ltd and CW Electrical is a family run business that has

made training and development its top priority since it was formed by managing director, Harry Meese, 31 years ago.

Being named Small Employer of the Year in 2016 was the company's first major award since the SME Award 2007 from Constructing Excellence Wales and has been a springboard for significant business growth.

"Entering last year's Apprenticeship Awards Cymru was one of the best things we have ever done,"

said director Rachel Meese-Kendall.

"It has taken the company to another level and created lots of opportunities for us. I was advised by one of the judges, a former award winner, to take every opportunity that was given to us and that's what I've done.

"Winning the award has thrown us into the limelight and improved our business turnover. Due to extra work, we have recruited three more staff and are taking on three new apprentices from a local school in September."

The company now employs 39 staff, with another new job in the pipeline. There are five apprentices currently on the books and another two trainees are soon to progress to apprenticeships.

The company mainly works for large residential landlords and development companies across South Wales, but it is now expanding into England.

Rachel explained that the company had planned for business growth, due to an upsurge in the building industry, by ensuring that its workforce is multi-skilled. Former apprentices who have grown with the business make up around 70 per cent of their operative team.

The company works with training provider Coleg QS to provide the best training possible for not only its own workforce but also apprentices employed by other contractors and clients.

Delighted that the company was continuing to reap the rewards of investing in apprenticeships, Skills and Science Minister, Julie James said:

"Developing skilled people is vital for our economy and Crimewatch Alarms Ltd and CW Electrical is a shining example of the business success that can be achieved by investing in and developing the workforce."

The Minister added:

“More employers across Wales are recognising the value of our successful apprenticeship programme and the need to raise higher level skills in order to address skills gaps and respond to industry changes.

“The Apprenticeship Awards Cymru provide a perfect platform for us to celebrate the achievements of the programme through our star apprentices, employers and learning providers whose stories never cease to amaze and inspire.”

The awards recognise learners, employers and training providers across Wales, who have excelled on the Welsh Government’s Traineeship and Apprenticeship Programmes.

The Apprenticeship Programme is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.

In the employability category, there are awards for Traineeship Learner of the Year for Engagement and Level 1. There are also awards for the best foundation apprentice, apprentice and higher apprentice of the year.

The business category includes awards for small (1 to 49), medium (50 to 249), large (250 to 4,999) and macro (5,000 plus) employer of the year, while work-based learning practitioners will compete for assessor and tutor of the year.

Mark Drakeford announces additional £20m for social care in 2017-18

The extra funding announced today is on top of the £25m for social care provided to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant and £10m to help meet workforce cost pressures in the final 2017-18 Budget.

It brings the additional investment for social care to £55m in 2017-18, which is in line with the extra investment made in social care in England.

Announcing the funding today, Professor Drakeford said:

“This announcement demonstrates the importance that we attach to our social care sector.

“Despite the cuts we have seen to our budget, we have continued to prioritise funding for social care and taken specific measures to support the sustainability of the social care sector, including investing £60m through the Intermediate Care Fund to support the

integration of health and social care.

“The extra £20m announced today provides an important boost and brings our total additional investment in social services to £55m in 2017-18.”

Minister for Social Services and Public Health Rebecca Evans added:

“The social care sector is of national strategic importance to the Welsh Government.

“When combined, this £55m of funding shows that once again Wales is leading the way when it comes to ensuring that social care is properly financed and resourced.”

[Health Secretary connects with NHS Wales staff](#)

Health Service employees in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan will be first in Wales to get an opportunity to ask Mr Gething questions about the health service at a Cabinet Connect event.

The first staff Q&A session will be held at University of Wales Hospital, Cardiff, and invitations have been sent to Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Public Health Wales and Wales Ambulance Service staff in the area.

Mr Gething said:

“I have had the great pleasure to meet many frontline health employees during visits across Wales and I wanted to build on those discussions through Cabinet Connect events.

“I want 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.”

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.