

My Travel Pass to double eligibility

Previously open to 16 to 18 year-olds, Transport Secretary Ken Skates made the announcement today that the scheme is not only secured until March 2020, but will be available to many more people.

The one-third discounted offer began in 2015 when Welsh Government launched a pilot discounted bus travel scheme to provide all 16, 17 and 18 year-olds with discounted bus fares for any journey within Wales. The extension should take effect from early December 2018.

Existing MyTravelPass holders who have a 16 to 18 years pass, and who wish to take-up this exciting offer, need not do anything now, but should reapply shortly before their existing pass expires.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I’m pleased to announce that following the consultation exercise I undertook last year and talks with the bus industry we have been able to increase the upper age for discounted bus travel from 18 to 21 years.

“I would like to thank the bus industry for agreeing to this improvement. We appreciate their co-operation, as although the Welsh Government pays, their participation is voluntary.

“We will continue negotiations with our bus industry partners during 2019 to identify any further enhancements, potentially involving some of the key issues raised during the consultation we might jointly achieve.

“Today’s enhancement of the MyTravelPass scheme will not only help young people in training or apprenticeships, and during the transition into work, but will hopefully also encourage more to use the bus for more of their journeys. This way, they will be helping to tackle congestion and air quality in our towns and cities.

The MyTravelPass scheme was originally established as part of a budget deal between the Welsh Government and the Welsh Liberal Democrats during the last assembly term.

To keep in touch with the date from which applications may be made, visit www.mytravelpass.gov.wales or call 0300 200 22 33.

Kirsty Williams announces single biggest investment in support for teachers

The National Approach to Professional Learning (NAPL), announced today by the Education Secretary, will see £9 million in this financial year, increasing to £15 million next financial year. It is the single biggest investment in support for teachers in Wales since devolution.

The funding will give schools the time and resources they need to plan ahead for the new curriculum and ensure that changes are made in a way that will prioritise the wellbeing of teachers and minimise disruption to pupils' learning. The funding will also help ensure that there is cover for staff to be released for professional learning.

Under the NAPL, Professional Learning will be an entitlement for all practitioners in schools, not just teachers.

Schools will also be encouraged to create, share and exploit learning opportunities with other schools and organisations as they work together in clusters.

One of the most striking features of the NAPL will be an entirely new approach to how teachers learn. A much more accessible blend of learning will be available through Wales' regions and universities. This will encompass learning outside the classroom, online learning, classroom learning and coaching.

This will ensure that teachers have much greater flexibility about how and when they learn.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

"This major investment shows how highly we value teachers' professional learning. It is an investment in excellence and we are aiming for nothing less than a wholesale reform of how teachers learn; a process that starts from the moment they begin initial teacher education and goes right the way through their career.

"This is a time of great change in our education system and it will be impossible to deliver our new curriculum without a high-quality education workforce. That is why we are making it easier for teachers to learn and explore the curriculum, giving them the time they need and not compromising their day to day work or pupils' learning.

"We are also providing schools with the option of working together to help them make the changes ahead of the new curriculum. This

means that staff can be released to be involved in collaborative professional learning and planning, drawing from the very best evidence-based research.”

[First Minister takes steps to transform refuge provision and sexual violence services in Wales](#)

The review, led by the Wales Centre for Public Policy, will examine some of best international examples of services and support, and engage with people who have experience of refuge and sexual abuse services, to develop a made-in-Wales model that provides a world-leading standard of support to victims of sexual violence.

Earlier this year, the First Minister made a commitment to make Wales a world-leader in women’s rights and gender equality, and make Wales the safest country in Europe for women.

Today, the First Minister and the Welsh Government’s national advisor for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, Yasmin Khan, will visit New Pathways in Cardiff, where they will meet staff and survivors.

New Pathways, which receives support from Welsh Government, is the largest provider of sexual violence services in Wales.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the First Minister said:

“It is unfathomable that, in the UK today we call ourselves civilised, yet 1 woman in 5 has experienced sexual violence, and 1 in 4 experienced domestic abuse. This cannot continue.

“Change must happen if Wales is going to become a world leader in women’s rights and gender quality and improve the lives of women and girls. Today, I’m setting out my intentions to conduct an expert-led review to make improvements to the services we provide to women affected by sexual violence, and a second review into refuge provision.

“As a society we have shied away from talking about domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, but this only contributes to myths and misinformation which can make survivors worried about speaking up. It’s time to change. The more we talk about what is happening, the more we spread messages of support and awareness, and the more we

fight against this.”

The First Minister also reiterated his calls to the Prime Minister to urgently proceed with measures that will ratify the Istanbul Convention and make Wales, and the UK as a whole, the safest place for women in Europe.

By agreeing to ratify the Istanbul Convention, the UK government would be required to protect funding for domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centres, helplines and offer counselling for domestic abuse survivors. It would also ensure education on healthy relationships is consistently provided in schools.

The First Minister added:

“In Wales, we have already met all the obligations of the Istanbul Convention within our powers. I have written to the Prime Minister urging her to set a timetable for implementing legislation that will allow ratification of the Istanbul Convention to happen. The UK has signed up, now it is time for the Prime Minister to step up to this gesture and place in law commitments to better protect women and girls.

“Until then, I am determined to do all I can to make sure every person in Wales who experiences any form of domestic abuse or sexual violence can receive the services they need at the time they need it.

“I am so grateful to the survivors who have agreed to meet me today and to those who will contribute to our reviews. I know it’s not easy to speak about their experiences, but their voices will be heard and are crucial in changing things for the better.”

Safeguarding week: We need to act NOW to protect children and adults at risk from abuse

To mark the start of Safeguarding Week (12th – 16th November), the Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies and the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, said they remain concerned about the number of people who suffer from abuse, neglect and exploitation in Wales each year.

Statistics show:

- Nearly 3,000 children in Wales are on the child protection register because of neglect, psychological, sexual or other forms of abuse.
- Over 19,000 adults were reported to local authorities as being at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Welsh Government has taken firm action to tackle the abuse and neglect of children and adults.

In 2016, a law was introduced in Wales – the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act – which strengthens existing safeguarding arrangements for children by placing on relevant partners, such as the NHS, police, probation and youth offending teams, a duty to report where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is at risk.

The Act introduces parallel provisions for relevant partners to report to the local authority someone suspected to be an adult at risk of abuse or neglect. This is supplemented by a duty for the local authority to make enquires to determine whether any action is required to safeguard adults at risk.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The abuse and neglect of children and adults is completely unacceptable. One of the most arrowing aspects of my role as Minister is receiving reports of children and adults who have experienced terrible abuse or neglect.

“As a government, we’ve introduced tough new laws to ensure robust mechanisms are in place to safeguard children and adults. I’m asking everyone to think about what they can do, how people act on their concerns is important because together we can all help to keep children and adults safe from abuse.”

As part of efforts to prevent abuse happening in the first place and to identify abuse when it happens, the Welsh Government is funding a new pan-Wales campaign, which is being launched this week. The theme of the Stop it Now campaign will be to tackle child sexual abuse by providing information and learning for practitioners and to parents and carers. Nearly 1000 people across Wales will benefit from awareness raising sessions as part of the campaign.

Huw Irranca-Davies added:

“I’m really pleased the Welsh Government is working with Stop It Now! Wales to launch this new campaign, which will help encourage the people of Wales to play their part in stopping child sexual abuse.

“Together, we can and must ensure every child in Wales is safe.”

Activities during Safeguarding Week also includes a poster campaign aimed at raising awareness of the need to speak out and seek help, and where to go for that help.

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams said:

“Safeguarding Week provides a really important opportunity for us to recognise the vital role that schools play in safeguarding our children and young people. It is school staff who have daily contact with our learners, so they are in a strong position to identify signs of abuse and neglect at the earliest possible stage so that action can be taken and support put in place. The campaign will increase awareness within our school communities and also make sure that both children and young people and school staff know where to turn for help.”

“Their sacrifices and legacy will endure” – First Minister marks 100 years since the end of the First World War

The service will be attended by Their Royal Highnesses The Earl and Countess of Wessex, as guests of the First Minister. The address will be given by The Archbishop of Wales, The Most Reverend John Davies.

During the service, the congregation will hear readings from Nia Haf and Ethan Williams from Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Mari Wyn Jones from Ysgol Maes Garmon in Mold.

Speaking ahead of the service, the First Minister said:

“Each Remembrance Sunday is an opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who have served to protect the peace we are privileged to enjoy in Wales today.

“This Remembrance Sunday is particularly poignant, as we mark 100 years since the end of the First World War. Today, we remember the sacrifice of servicemen from Wales during the war. We also remember the countless men, women and children who played pivotal roles on the home front and shaped our society in ways no generation had done before.

“To this remarkable generation, we give thanks. Their contribution and legacy will endure.”

The Archbishop of Wales, The Most Reverend John Davies, said:

“We gather to give thanks for the end of what remains one of the most significant, brutal and wasteful conflicts in the world’s history. May today’s remembering and reflecting on the First World War lead us personally to commit positively in making every effort to make our world, our nation, our communities, the kind of place which those whose lives we honour believed they were fighting to build. Any unwillingness to make that commitment risks devaluing the sacrifices of all who have fought for justice down the centuries, not least those who will be particularly in our minds this coming weekend.”

Over the past 4 years, the First Minister has led the Welsh Government’s centenary commemoration of the First World War, Cymru’n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918.

The programme has delivered national events, exhibitions, community based activities and education programmes across Wales, inviting people of all ages to reflect and learn more about this important period in our history.

The First Minister added:

“I am proud to have been part of the commemorative programme that has fittingly marked all aspects of the First World War and the impact it had on the country. I am particularly pleased with the way people have embraced the Cymru’n Cofio programme, with communities up and down the country recognising the sacrifices people in Wales made, from large scale events such as Mametz Wood and Passchendaele, to school projects which are helping to create a Wales-wide archive of the people from our communities who died during the conflict. The response has been remarkable.

“I hope through the work that has taken place over the past four years our current and future generations will gain a greater understanding of the significance of the events of the First World War and avoid the mistakes of the past. That would be a worthy legacy of this programme of commemoration.”

The Cymru’n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 programme has been extended to 2020.