New drive to connect Welsh pupils with coding – Kirsty Williams

Computer code is a set of rules or instructions that makes it possible to create computer software, apps and websites. It is a means by which learners can transition from being users to becoming authors of technology.

The Welsh Government aims to expand Code Clubs in every part of Wales.

Approximately 300 clubs currently exist across the country and the Education Secretary wants all pupils to have the opportunity to learn about and get involved in coding as the importance of digital skills continues to grow.

There are currently around 1.5 million jobs in the digital sector in the UK, 400,000 of which involve coding. It is estimated that there will be 100,000 new coding jobs by 2020.

The new plan to expand Code Clubs in Wales – 'Cracking the code', aims to:

- Raise awareness and highlight the benefits of Code Clubs to teachers, pupils and parents;
- Break down barriers to participation in code clubs;
- Broker and facilitate coding experiences with business and industry.

The plan will have a specific focus on encouraging stronger relationships between business, industry and the third sector to support the development of coding skills.

The plan will focus on:

- Encourage parents to get involved in coding and the development of digital skills;
- Welsh medium support and resources;
- Getting more girls interested in coding and technology.

A number of local, national and international partners have agreed to work with Welsh Government to support the delivery of the plan. They include Code Club UK, Microsoft Education, Sony, Bafta, Big Learning Company, British Council, BT Barefoot Computing, Computing at school (CAS), Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Raspberry Pi Foundation, the RAF, Technocamps, and Universities in Wales.

Kirsty Williams said:

> "Code is part of almost everyone's lives. When we check out social media, access an app or computer we are using systems created through code. It is an essential building block of our modern world and I want to make sure as many of our young people have knowledge of it as they develop their digital skills.

"Through this £1.3m of new investment we are aiming to expand the number Code Clubs in every area of Wales for learners aged 3-16 so that they can develop their skills which will be vital part of thriving in our increasingly digital economy.

"We will work with teachers, the education consortia and others to help us crack the code for all our pupils."

Maria Quevedo, Director Code Club UK said:

"We're excited to be working with the Welsh Government to give more children and young people across Wales the opportunity to attend a Code Club, and to learn about computing and digital making.

"Code Clubs are a fun and engaging way to help the next generation develop these essential skills, so they are capable of understanding our increasingly digital world and equipped for the jobs of the future."

As part of this initiative, the Welsh Government will shortly be launching an innovative Minecraft Education pilot programme with Microsoft UK

Changes to the curriculum mean digital skills will now be used through all parts of a pupil's schooling and not just isolated to specific ICT or computer science classes. The Welsh Government's Digital Competence Framework is now available to all schools and follows two independent reviews that recommended changes.