

Health Ministry undertakes largest ever drug survey in the world for determining the quality of drugs

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India had entrusted the work relating to carrying out a Survey of the extent of Problems of 'Spurious and Not of Standard Quality Drugs' to the National Institute of Biologicals (NIB), Noida.

More GP surgeries in Wales are open for longer

New figures show that more GP practices in Wales are open between 8.00am and 6.30pm in the week and more appointments are being made available to patients early in the morning and later in the day.

Wednesday 22 February 2017

In 2016:

- 85% of GP practices were open for daily core hours or within an hour of them, an increase from 60% in 2011
- Only 3% of GP practices were closed for half a day on one or more week days, a decrease compared to 4% in 2015
- 84% of practices offered appointments at any time between 17:00 and 18:30 every week day, compared to 79% in 2015
- The percentage of practices offering appointments before 8:30 on at least two weekdays increased from 16% in 2015 to 19% in 2016.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"We know that access to primary care services is extremely important to people. In Taking Wales Forward, our programme for government, we committed to continuing to improve access to GP surgeries, and these figures demonstrate we are delivering this. These figures also show that more appointments are available for people at more convenient times. I am pleased to see that the trend of improvement has been continued for 2016.

"I want to say thank you to our GPs and their teams who are working

hard to extend their opening hours in Wales. They are also working with other health professionals to ensure that people receive their care from the right person. This might mean seeing a pharmacist, physiotherapist or a nurse. This will allow GPs to focus their time and expertise on people with complex care needs. We will continue to work collaboratively with GPs and other professions to improve access and patient experience.”

UK growth accelerated in the fourth quarter of last year

The fourth quarter saw UK growth speed up to 0.7% for the three months. The quarterly pattern last year according to the ONS was 0.2% in Q1, 0.6% in each of Quarters 2 and 3, and 0.7% in Q4. The ONS says this amounts to 1.8% growth for the year as a whole, though the four quarters as reported gives you a figure of 2.1%. What is clear from these figures is the economy grew faster after the Brexit vote than before by a decent margin, the opposite of the official and expert forecasts at the time.

As the ONS rightly said “In the fourth quarter the UK experienced the strongest rate of growth among European groupings and G7 countries”. Let’s hope the Treasury adjust their forecasts for our economy in the Budget statement, as their recent forecasts have been far too low.

Right to Buy suspended in Flintshire

The move comes ahead of the Welsh Government introducing legislation to abolish the Right to Buy across the whole of Wales.

The Right to Buy allows eligible social housing tenants across the UK to buy their council or housing association property at a discount. The proposed legislation will end these rights, protecting social housing stock from further reduction.

Over the past 30 years, the Right to Buy has resulted in a significant reduction in social housing stock. Between 1981 and 2014, 138,709 council homes were sold – this is a 45% reduction in the social housing available since the policy was first introduced.

Research also indicates that many of these homes end up in the private rented

sector and, as a result, cost local people more to rent and, in some cases, the public purse more in housing benefit.

The First Minister said:

“I have agreed to Flintshire council’s application to suspend the Right to Buy to help them deal with the pressure their social housing is facing and to ensure that homes are available to those who need them.

“While this will help one area for a short period of time, we also need to address this issue for the long term. This is why we will be introducing legislation to abolish the Right to Buy in Wales.

“The Right to Buy is depleting our social housing stock. This damaging policy is further increasing the pressure on our social housing supply and is forcing many vulnerable people to wait longer for a home.

“Legislating to end the Right to Buy is the only sure way to prevent this and give social landlords the confidence to invest in building more of the affordable homes Wales needs.”

[Chinese entrepreneur to open two new stores in Wales](#)

The news announced today (Wednesday 22 Feb) in China follows a meeting in Shanghai between Economy Secretary Ken Skates and Bobby Zhou, CEO Anbo Holdings, a wholesale and retail business specialising in engineered and solid wood flooring products.

In the UK the company operates under the retail brand Flooring REPUBLIC which already has six stores in South Wales employing twenty people. The new stores will be in Bridgend and the other potentially in North Wales.

Ken Skates, who is leading a trade mission to China to further strengthen trade and export links between the two countries, said:

“Anbo, which was set up in the UK ten years ago by entrepreneur Bobby Zhou, is a great success story. Since its inception the business has flourished and seen an average 15% annual increase in turnover, with a projected £16m turnover this year.

“The Welsh Government has worked closely with Anbo Holdings in both

in China and in Wales and this support has helped the business to expand and increase its footprint in Wales. I was particularly pleased to hear that its stores in Wales are amongst its most successful in the UK which has been attributed to the strong work ethic and enthusiasm of its staff.

“The news, confirmed today, that it is to open a further two stores in Wales is excellent while discussions are also underway on the potential of Flooring REPUBLIC opening a new manufacturing and training facility in Wales.”

Bobby Zhou said:

“Our Welsh stores are amongst our most successful across the country and our sales performance in Wales exceeded our forecasts .

“We chose to expand in Wales because of the fantastic infrastructure, hardworking people and the warm acceptance that we received. We are impressed with the business environment, the ease which you can get things done, and most of all because our people in Wales have a fantastic work ethic and understand our passion for great customer service – which is core value of Flooring Republic brand!

“The Welsh Government has assisted greatly by helping us find new suitable properties and has advised on expansion areas. One of our main development areas is the introduction of an apprenticeship scheme which we are currently discussing with the Welsh Government.”