

[Extra £30m to reduce NHS waiting times in Wales](#)

Over the last two years, £100 million of additional funding has been provided to NHS Wales to reduce referral to treatment, diagnostic and therapy waiting times. This has resulted in the lowest number of people waiting over 36 weeks for referral to treatment for over four years.

Similar improvements have also been seen in diagnostic waiting times, with the latest figures the best since September 2009 and in therapy waiting times, with the March 2018 position the lowest since June 2011.

Health Boards have now submitted plans to access funding from the £30m performance fund to further reduce waiting lists by March 2019. Health Boards will only receive the full amount of funding if they meet the agreed delivery targets to cut waiting lists.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“This extra funding is available to health boards to help them reduce waiting times in key pressure areas. I recently announced our long term vision for the NHS and Social Care, A Healthier Wales, backed by £100m to transform the way the service is delivered in the future. But in the short to medium term we also need to find new ways to reduce waiting times for patients who have already waited beyond our targets.

“Health boards will need to meet the targets they set out in order to receive the full funding. I expect to see significant improvements on waiting times as we did in the first two years of this fund.”

[Most people in Wales satisfied with their daily lives and public services](#)

The National Survey for Wales is a face-to-face survey of more than 11,000 randomly-selected adults aged 16 and over. The results are used by the Welsh Government to help make Wales a better place to live.

Key results from the National Survey 2017-18 include:

- 86% of people surveyed said they are satisfied with their GP care and

90% are satisfied with the care they received at their last NHS appointment

- 88% of parents are satisfied with their child's primary school and 75% with their child's secondary school
- 68% said they can keep up with all their bills and commitments without difficulty
- 86% believe the Welsh language is something to be proud of
- 77% are satisfied with their ability to get to services in their local area
- 85% of people use the internet.

Around half of the questions in the 2017-18 survey are new and a number of questions cover the arts, culture and heritage activities; ability to access local services and attitudes to the Welsh language.

The results show that overall, 82% of people in Wales are satisfied with their lives. Welcoming the results, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"The National Survey is an important resource for us and provides an overview of people's lives and changing lifestyles.

"It helps us to design and deliver public services by finding out where things are working well and also where there are issues which need to be addressed.

"The survey was carried out in the face of the UK Government's continuing and damaging programme of austerity. Despite this, the Welsh Government continues to invest in public services fit for the modern age and the results published today show that people in Wales are generally satisfied with the public services that are so important to us all.

"The findings of this survey are very timely and will help us ensure we are able to deliver the services people rightly expect.

"Hearing the views of people across the country will help us make Wales an even better place to live, work and enjoy."

[National Survey for Wales 2017-18](#)

Wales' premium automotive business to business event in Wales opens

Organised by the Welsh Automotive Forum (WAF) and supported by Welsh Government, this is the premium automotive business to business event in

Wales.

Hosted in the Cardiff City Stadium, Autolink 2018 will bring together delegates from across the sector.

In his speech, Ken Skates will say:

“These days, it seems the automotive sector is rarely out of the news headlines.

“We find ourselves talking about a host of subjects, from the unknown impact of Brexit and the associated effect on investment and car sales, to the need to improve air quality fuelling issues such as the debate over the future of the diesel engine, use restrictions in city centres and the uptake of alternatively fuelled vehicles. Not to mention being asked to consider the development of autonomous vehicles and what they mean for future car ownership and personal mobility.

“With these issues and more creating uncertainty, it is right we should come together to put the spotlight on the sector in Wales.”

Autolink 2018 will consist of around 200 attendees including 50 exhibitors drawn from the Welsh based automotive supply chain, representatives from vehicle manufacturers and Tier 1 suppliers (companies supplying components directly to the chain’s original equipment manufacturer), academia and visitors from the wider supply chain community.

Ken Skates will continue by saying:

“There are many topics open to discussion here today – free movement of goods and people and the absence of tariff and non-tariff barriers, the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan, reducing carbon emissions. I could go on.

“Here in Wales, we have strengthened our commitment towards reaching our own emission reduction targets. Our Environment Act sets out a clear decarbonisation pathway for Wales within the context of our existing UK and international obligations, with a reduction in emissions of at least 80% by 2050.

“Decarbonisation has a significant place in our new Economic Contract which is part of our innovative Economic Action Plan. This will see a new way of working with businesses to create wealth, jobs and wellbeing.

“Change and a degree of uncertainty are part of the environment with in which we all operate. To prosper, we must all adapt to that new environment.”

Minimum price for alcohol Bill approved

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill is part of the Welsh Government's wider efforts to reduce excessive drinking, recognising the impacts this can have on people's health and well-being.

The new law will address longstanding and specific health concerns around the effects of excess alcohol consumption, which is estimated to lead to nearly 55,000 alcohol-related hospital admissions a year, costing the Welsh NHS over £150m annually. In 2016, there were 504 alcohol-related deaths in Wales.

The legislation supports the Welsh Government's comprehensive strategy to tackle hazardous and harmful drinking by tackling the availability and affordability of cheap, strong alcohol, which is part of wider efforts to improve and protect the health of the population of Wales.

Following approval by Assembly Members, the Bill will become law once it has received Royal Assent.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I'm very pleased the National Assembly has given its seal of approval to our landmark legislation.

"Last year alone, there were over 500 alcohol-related deaths and nearly 55,000 alcohol-related hospital admissions in Wales, with the direct health care costs attributable to alcohol amounting to an estimated £159m. But even more of an issue – is the devastation that lies behind these figures. Devastation for families, impacts on communities, and consequences for our NHS staff and support services – as they all cope with the aftermath of alcohol-related death and disease, every day.

"This legislation provides us with an opportunity for a step change. It gives us a chance to do more to address alcohol-related harms. And ultimately, it gives us a chance to do more to try to save lives. This legislation takes a sensible, targeted approach to a very real and evident problem in Wales today. But it will be supported by a range of additional actions being taken forward to support those in need – forming part of the Welsh Government's wider Substance Misuse Strategy.

"Wales, like so many other western countries, has a problem with cheap, strong, readily-available alcohol. This legislation will make an important contribution to addressing this issue."

Once enacted, the new law will allow Welsh Ministers to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol supplied in Wales. It will make it an offence for alcohol to be supplied below a minimum price made up of that minimum unit price, the strength of the alcohol and its volume, specifically targeting cheap, strong alcohol.

The legislation will target and aim to reduce the amount of alcohol being consumed by hazardous and harmful drinkers, whilst minimising impacts on moderate drinkers.

The level of the minimum unit price for this purpose will be specified in regulations made by the Welsh Ministers following a consultation this year.

The new minimum pricing regime is currently expected to come into force during the summer of 2019.

[New Ministerial group to tackle homelessness in Wales launched](#)

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I have been very clear that Wales must lead the way on tackling youth homelessness, with bold new approaches and interventions that make a real difference. It’s vital that government works with partners to help young people to avoid crisis situations and get into stable accommodation.

“Today we are announcing a task and finish group, to be chaired by Housing and Regeneration Minister Rebecca Evans, to lead on this important area of work, building on the extra £10m to tackle youth homelessness I announced at the end of last year.

“I said when I helped to launch this campaign that the words ‘youth’ and ‘homelessness’ do not belong together. We will continue to work with the End Youth Homelessness Cymru campaign to ensure all young people in Wales have a safe place to call home.”

Housing and Regeneration Minister Rebecca Evans said:

“Through this group we will ensure that across government and beyond, in areas such as social services, education, mental health, substance misuse and youth justice, we have a unified approach to prevention, and to supporting young people who are homeless to obtain somewhere safe and secure to live.”

“The group will also advise on the implementation of the Housing First approach across Wales, including evaluation. Housing First is an innovative approach that has been proven to work, providing homeless people with accommodation and then offering them the support they need to be able to sustain a tenancy themselves. I’m looking forward to taking the lead on this work.”

Frances Beecher, Chief Executive of Llamau , which is the lead charity in the End Youth Homelessness Cymru campaign, said:

“We are delighted to see further commitment from the Welsh Government to ending youth homelessness in Wales which will build on the progress that End Youth Homelessness Cymru has made over the last year.

“We’re looking forward to continuing to work with Welsh Government to ensure that more young people are prevented from becoming homeless and that young people get the right support as soon as they need it.”