

Welsh Government funded childcare offer expanded

When rolled out across Wales by September 2020, the offer will provide 30 hours of Welsh Government-funded early education and childcare to working parents of 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks of the year.

The Minister is today announcing the offer is being extended to cover the following local authority areas from September 2018:

- Cardiff – phased introduction
- Newport – phased introduction
- Torfaen – the entire county
- Neath Port Talbot – phased introduction
- Ceredigion – the entire county
- Conwy – phased introduction
- Wrexham – phased introduction

The offer is currently available in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Caerphilly, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea and Blaenau Gwent.

Today's announcement means the number of authorities delivering the offer will double by this September, demonstrating progress and real momentum. The offer is expected to be delivered in at least some parts of most local authorities in Wales by September 2019.

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

“Our ground-breaking childcare offer is making a real difference to parents right across Wales, reducing the strain on family income and helping ensure childcare is not a barrier to them taking up employment or increasing their hours.

“I'm delighted to confirm the offer is being rolled out to seven more local authorities across Wales, as we continue the work to roll out the offer across the entire country by September 2020.”

Health Secretary welcomes reduction in child tooth decay

The Welsh Oral Health Information Unit (Cardiff University) report, published in partnership with Public Health Wales, shows that the percentage of

children experiencing obvious tooth decay has dropped significantly from 45% in 2004/05 to 30 % in 2016/17.

The Welsh Government launched the Designed to Smile campaign in 2008/09 to improve children's oral health and has been piloting a preventive approach to care in dental practices across Wales.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I am very pleased to see the progress being made in reducing tooth decay in children. It is obvious the Welsh Government's investment in Designed to Smile and access to preventive dental services is having a real impact across Wales.

However there is no room for complacency. We have revamped our prevention programme to include more help for very young children and their parents and we are also stepping up prevention for older adults."

The Chief Dental Officer for Wales, Colette Bridgman added:

"Dental decay is unpleasant, can be painful to experience, it is costly to treat and yet is largely preventable. Research has shown that dental decay often starts early and therefore early prevention will have the most impact. The evidence is now clear that sustained investment in prevention in services and targeted population programmes can reduce dental decay.

It is important that every young child in Wales is supervised to brush their teeth with family fluoride toothpaste at bedtime, and on one other occasion every day. Having nothing sweet to eat or drink in the last hour before bedtime will also help to protect teeth from decay."

Newtown Bypass progress on track

Contractors are now more than two years into construction and the project is on programme to be completed in early 2019. As part of the development, the bridge across the Dolfor Valley was recently built which allows the remaining earthwork operations to take place.

The Bypass to the south of Newtown will be approximately 6.5km long and extends from the A489 Llanidloes Road near Glandulas Holiday Park (West of Newtown) to the A483 Pool Road (East of Newtown).

The scheme will improve safety by allowing large high sided heavy goods and agricultural vehicles to travel through the area away from residential areas as well as reducing traffic congestion on nearby roads.

During the visit, the First Minister met with the workforce including apprentices working on the bypass. £10.3 million has been spent on employing people from Wales which includes apprentices.

Small and Medium sized enterprises in Wales have also benefited from £11.5 million spend as a result of the bypass development.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I’ve been really pleased to see the progress being made on the Newtown Bypass. This is a significant development which will improve safety, relieve traffic congestion and ensure better access to jobs and services, delivering a real boost to the local economy.

“A strong emphasis has been placed on providing local employment and training opportunities and there are currently 16 apprentices and graduate trainees working on the bypass which is really good news.

“We have also worked closely with Powys County Council to develop Active Travel provisions which have been included as part of the scheme.

“The Newtown bypass is a great example of the Welsh Government’s commitment to invest in our transport infrastructure, help industry grow and deliver for communities in Mid Wales.”

[Adult learning key to helping people into work](#)

The Minister was marking the start of Adult Learners’ Week by visiting Kidzz Fun in Ystrad Mynach where Working Links, an organisation that helps socially excluded people maximise their potential, were holding an open day.

The soft play centre was open to families free of charge so that parents could meet local employers and receive advice on options for returning to work and accessing learning opportunities, all while their children were busy playing.

Funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund and organised by the Learning & Work Institute Wales, Adult Learners’ Week is the UK’s largest

annual festival of learning. It aims to inspire thousands of adults each year to discover how learning can change their lives – people like Aqsa Ahmed-Hussein.

Asqa agreed to an arranged marriage at the age of 18, when education was the furthest thing from her mind. By the age of 28 she had four children and saw herself as ‘just’ a wife and mum, but when Aqsa’s fourth child was due to start school she knew she needed to update her skills to support her family.

She completed several courses including computer skills, child psychology, counselling skills and a teaching assistant course, all of which gave her the skills she needed to find a job that made paying for childcare worthwhile. Now 41, Aqsa works full-time as a one-to-one classroom assistant at a primary school and is considering further training to become a teacher.

The Minister said:

“I was very pleased to visit Kidzz Fun today and to see how Working Links are helping people in the area learn about the opportunities that are available to them and encouraging people to learn new skills.

“We are committed to improving the prosperity of the people of Wales and the Employment Plan I launched earlier this year sets out clearly how we intend to provide an individualised approach to help people tackle the barriers that are preventing them from working.

“For many, the barrier is a lack of skills or qualifications. In 2017, 21% per cent of those who were economically inactive reported having no qualifications, compared to just 5% of those in employment. This is why I am committed to helping people to improve their skills through adult learning as it will improve their chances of getting fair, secure and rewarding employment.

“Undertaking new learning as an adult is not only a great way to improve employability but is also a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, make new friends as well as boosting self-esteem and confidence.”

The Learning and Work Institute Director for Wales David Hagendyk said:

“Faced with an ageing society, a changing world of work, and the rapid deployment of automation and artificial intelligence, giving adults the opportunity to learn throughout their lives is more important than ever. Adult Learners’ Week gives thousands of people across Wales the chance to have a go at learning something new and to develop their skills.”

More information:

For more information on Adult Learners' Week and find events near you, go to [Careers Wales](#), call 0800 028 4844 or follow [@skillsgatewaycw](#).

[Go ahead for £3.5m Data Innovation Accelerator](#)

The new Data Innovation Accelerator (DIA) has been part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Welsh Government who are joining forces with Cardiff University to develop the project.

Its aim is to transfer data science and analytics knowledge from Cardiff University to Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Wales so they can develop and grow their businesses.

The funding will enable researchers to work on collaborative projects with companies specialising in ICT and cyber security, advanced materials, energy and eco-innovation.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I am proud that the Welsh Government is supporting this exciting Data Innovation Accelerator which will bridge the link between research and business so that companies on the ground can benefit from some of the innovative and ground breaking research undertaken in Wales.

"The project is very much in line with our Economic Action Plan, which, sets out a clear whole Government approach to supercharging the hi-tech businesses of the future.

"The £1.86m from the ERDF through Welsh Government will help SMEs in Wales to flourish, creating high quality data science jobs and helping to develop exciting new products and services that can be used in Wales and throughout the world."

Cardiff University's School of Computer Science and Informatics will be recruiting eight skilled data scientists to kick-start the project this autumn.

DIA co-director Professor Roger Whitaker, College Dean of Research and Professor of Collective Intelligence, said:

"The DIA will help exploit a growing opportunity for greater economic exploitation of data-driven analysis and machine

intelligence in businesses, using a targeted approach aligned to sector strengths in Wales, including ICT and cyber security; Advanced Materials; Energy & eco-innovation.”

Fellow DIA co-director, Dr Pete Burnap added:

“The DIA will fill a gap in the current ‘data science eco-system’ in Wales. Schemes exist to support undergraduate qualifications, graduate mentoring, and help bigger businesses buy in expertise. But no provision currently exists to systematically build Data Science awareness, capacity and skills with SMEs in Wales. SMEs do not have the scale of resources available to the public sector or large companies to ‘trial’ new ways of working, or invest in unproven business transformation underpinned by data science. DIA seeks to address this gap.”

The DIA, which expects to launch in November, will be based within the Data Innovation Research Institute at Cardiff University.