

Additional £10m for social services in Wales to deal with winter pressures

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement ahead of a statement in the Assembly later this afternoon, in which he will update Assembly Members on how NHS Wales, local authorities and partners are managing winter pressures across health and care in Wales.

Health and Social Services Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Health and social services in Wales have been under significant pressure this winter, like the rest of the UK. It is testament to the commitment and skill of staff that the vast majority of people continue to receive the care they need in a compassionate, professional and timely manner.

“Social care plays a huge part in delivering care as close to home as possible. I realise it has been under considerable pressure over recent months. In recognition of the demand being experienced, I have decided to provide an additional £10m to Local Authorities to enable social services to support people in their homes and communities.”

Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies added:

“Our health and social care services are heavily dependent on each other. So I’m really pleased we have been able to put this extra £10m investment into our social services, so that local government can continue providing high quality social services to people across Wales.

“I want to thank our social services staff who continue to deliver high quality care during what continues to be a very challenging time.”

This investment is in addition to the additional £10m the Health Secretary announced earlier this year to support frontline services to support them in taking immediate action to help improve care.

The Welsh Government also invests £60m a year through its Integrated Care Fund, which is being used to develop more care and support at or close to home and help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and delays in discharges.

[Anthem, Music Fund Wales](#)

Backed with a £1m investment from the Welsh Government, Anthem, Music Fund Wales, is a pioneering endowment fund for music in Wales.

Set up by the Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales, Anthem is aimed at helping children and young people, from as young as three years old up to 25, access musical opportunities and develop their skills and talent.

This is an additional source of funding established for the long-term to enhance existing music funding in Wales. Celebrating the launch at Motorpoint Arena Cardiff, hosted by Connie Fisher, were the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, and Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas.

The event also showcased Wales's latest emerging talent, duo Into the Ark, Horizons / Gorwelion Launchpad awardees and 2017 finalists of The Voice, who are soon to tour the US with mentor Sir Tom Jones.

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams said:

“I want all our young people, whatever their background or ability, to enjoy music and to be able to develop their talents and skills. Anthem – Music Fund Wales, established with £1 million from the Welsh Government, is a ground-breaking initiative that will not only increase access to musical experiences but also enhance existing music services.

“This will build on the music education already delivered by schools as part of the new curriculum and will allow learners access to new and exciting opportunities outside of school.”

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport Lord Elis-Thomas AM, added:

“I am proud of the way the Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales have worked together in order to make Anthem a reality but in order to build the Fund we will need to work in partnership with the music industry across the UK.

“That’s why I am today calling on all artists and businesses across Wales to be part of the Fund and make sure that others can discover and share in the joy of music.”

The fund, which values the nation’s rich musical heritage, while firmly focussing on nurturing future talent, emerged from the recommendations of a

Welsh Government-commissioned independent Music Services Task and Finish Group.

Phil George, Chairman of the Arts Council of Wales, tasked by Government to deliver on Anthem's ambition, welcomed today's announcement, saying,

"There's no doubt that the citizens of Wales want to see our young people enriching their lives through musical expression. We must all hope that private and corporate donors will seize this new opportunity to join the Welsh Government in nurturing young musical talents and helping them delight and amaze us all."

The £1m investment from the Welsh Government is the first stage of establishing the capital of the fund which is set to grow over the next two to three years, with a target annual pattern of grant giving of up to £300,000 per annum scheduled from 2021 onwards.

The Anthem Board will be developing detailed criteria for applications, carefully considering how the funding can be used to develop opportunities for young people across Wales.

To ensure availability of funding for future generations the Anthem fund will need to be built up from a variety of sources – public, private and third sector – investing for the long term.

To turn up the volume on Anthem's aims and to support its ambitious fundraising effort, high-profile ambassadors are being sought representing all musical genres. Anthem Ambassadors will be supporters of the long-term goals of the fund to make a difference for musical talent and will act as figureheads for its campaigns.

Anthem Ambassadors, together with its Board Members, will be seeking supporters and partners passionate about ensuring young people throughout Wales have access to opportunities to develop their musical skills and talent to support the ambitions of the fund.

For further details, see: www.anthem.wales

[Taskforce members discuss better transport links for the Valleys](#)

The eighth meeting of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, which was held at Lewis School Pengam, in Bargoed, was a chance for the group

to explore transport issues facing Valleys communities and learn more about how the latest developments in rail and bus transport, including the development of the South Wales Metro, could help address them.

Our Valleys Our Future, the recently published plan on how we deliver the priorities of the Taskforce, identified some of the actions required to improve and enhance the transport infrastructure in the Valleys.

Transport was one of the most commonly-raised issues by the public when the taskforce took evidence from Valleys communities. These engagement sessions helped to shape the taskforce's action and delivery plans – Our Valleys, Our Future – which was published in July and November 2017, respectively.

The Our Valleys, Our Future delivery plan identifies a series of actions required to improve and enhance the transport infrastructure across the Valleys.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies, who chairs the taskforce, said,

“We believe connectivity is key to supporting economic growth and building stronger communities.

“This meeting was a great opportunity to discuss with taskforce members the actions we are taking to improve infrastructure in the area, not only through the South Wales Metro project, but also from our wider actions on public transport which will in turn improve the economic growth for the Valleys region.”

He added that the South Wales Metro will not only improve links between communities but it will also support the local and wider Welsh economy by enhancing connectivity across Wales, the rest of the UK and Europe. It will allow people greater mobility and easier access to jobs and services.

Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, who is a member of the taskforce said

“We are moving forward with our vision of an integrated transport system, by looking to reshape public transport infrastructure and services across Wales.

“We will soon have rail franchising powers, so that we can, for the first time, specify and let Wales and Borders rail services. We are also securing the transfer of the Valley Lines north of Cardiff Queen Street, where we can separate operation from the South Wales Main Line, enabling us to deliver the next phase of the South Wales Metro.

“We are also looking at reforming the planning and delivery of local bus services in Wales which should lead to a real tangible

improvement for people in Valleys communities.”

[Aled Roberts to develop Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#)

Local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare and submit Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to Welsh Ministers for their consideration. Plans must set challenging targets for developing Welsh medium education in their areas.

The first statutory WESPs covering the period 2014 to 2017 were submitted to Welsh Ministers in December 2013. The second statutory WESPs covering the period 2017 to 2020 were submitted to Welsh Ministers in December 2016. A full assessment of the plans was undertaken which found the plans didn't go far enough to ensure sufficient growth in Welsh medium education to achieve our goal of a million Welsh speakers.

In 2017, the Minister's predecessor, Alun Davies announced that Aled Roberts would undertake a rapid review of the plans and offer recommendations for the future of Welsh medium education planning. All eighteen of Aled Roberts' recommendations were accepted and he will now begin work to implement them. An independent advisory board will be established to provide the necessary scrutiny during this process.

Eluned Morgan said:

“The WESPs submitted in 2017 initially lacked ambition and vision, which is why Aled was originally tasked to assess the plans. This is clear evidence that the system must now be improved so that we develop the right foundation for the planning of Welsh medium education that better reflects the ambition set in Cymraeg 2050, and the recognition that education is a key catalyst for change.

“I am delighted that Aled has agreed to continue the important work that he started with the review of the WESPs last year and look forward to working with him to ensure we have a system that is fit for the future and will help us to deliver the ambitious targets set in Cymraeg 2050.”

Aled Roberts said:

“The Cymraeg 2050 strategy defines the Government's ambition for the future of our language. It recognises the critical role that

early years and education will play in achieving our goals. I am looking forward to this role and will work tirelessly with others to bring about the change needed so that our youngsters have the opportunity to learn and work in a truly bilingual Wales.”

Wales confirmed as one of eight stops on Extreme Sailing Series™ global tour in 2018

Act 1 of the Extreme Sailing Series will begin next month in Oman and will then travel to Lake Garda, Italy, 24-27 May for the World Championship; followed by Barcelona, Spain, for the second time from the 14-17 June. The fleet head to Portugal from the 5-8 July, before St Petersburg, Russia, makes a comeback on the calendar from the 9-12 August.

Cardiff will welcome the fleet again as part of the Cardiff Harbour Festival over the UK August Bank Holiday weekend, 24-27 August. Always a firm favourite with the public and the sailors due to the accessible waterfront stadium and close racing, this year is expected to be even more spectacular as Wales celebrates its ‘Year of the Sea’.

The event is supported by the Welsh Government and Minister for Tourism, Lord Elis-Thomas elaborated:

“2018 will be the seventh time for Cardiff Bay to experience the excitement of the Extreme Sailing Series. We’re celebrating the Year of the Sea in Wales this year, which is a fantastic opportunity for Wales to make its mark as the UK’s top 21st century coastal destination – with world class products, events and experiences – with this event playing an important part in the line up of attractions.

“Extreme Sailing Series provides Cardiff with a global position alongside other premium worldwide venues and gives us the opportunity to promote Cardiff Bay internationally as a world class sailing and water sports venue.”

The fleet then leaves Europe behind and heads west to the USA, where San Diego will host the penultimate Act from the 18-21 October. The grand finale will take place in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Cllr Peter Bradbury said:

“The Extreme Sailing Series has become an integral part of the city’s events programme, showcasing Cardiff Bay as a leading waterfront city and sailing destination alongside stops such as Sydney and San Diego.

“Cardiff has proved a fantastic destination for spectators and crews alike since the global competition first visited the Bay seven years ago, offering a winning blend of stadium racing and a terrific atmosphere with crowds lining the waterfront.

“With the arrival of the Volvo Ocean Race this May, Cardiff Bay and the rest of the Welsh Capital can expect to be a hub for world class sailing action, entertainment and atmosphere, in what is set to be a very special year for Cardiff and Wales.”

Andy Tourell, the Extreme Sailing Series Event Director, who has led the development of this pioneering sporting property for the last six years commented:

“The Series will continue to deliver a busy menu of racing unrivalled by other events, which can see up to 32 races at every Act. This means more racing for the sailors and a better entertainment schedule for public spectators, VIP guests and media.

“We will also continue to build on the trend of the past four years that has seen the average size of racecourses grow, while maintaining the proximity of the foiling action to the shore.”

The world class standard of racing and unique corporate sponsorship platform offered by the Series, which is one of only seven World Sailing Special Events, will see both returning and new teams made up of some of the world’s best sailors.

2018 Calendar of Acts

14 – 17 March – Muscat, Oman

24 – 27 May – Lake Garda, Italy – World Championship

14 – 17 June – Barcelona, Spain

5 – 8 July – Portugal

9 – 12 August – St Petersburg, Russia

24 – 27 August – Cardiff, UK

18 – 21 October – San Diego, USA

29 November – 2 December – Los Cabos, Mexico