

Health Secretary opens new £4 million health and social care centre in Blaenau Ffestiniog

The centre has been built thanks to nearly £4 million of capital funding from the Welsh Government.

The changes to the services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area were made following engagement and public consultation. The Health Board has worked with partners and stakeholders to develop its plans and services for the new facility.

The Blaenau Ffestiniog GP practice, managed by the Health Board, has moved into the new centre. The innovative General Medical Services model utilises the support of the wider primary care community in line with Welsh Government's primary care strategy. The team includes one salaried GP supported by locums, a permanent Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Pharmacist and Musculo Skeletal Physiotherapy.

The new centre will also improve primary and community care in the area bringing services closer to patients' homes. It will:

- Bring together consultant led palliative care; outpatients and specialist nurse clinics, consultant led respiratory outpatients clinics sessions under one roof
- Improve children's services in the area by providing more child and adolescent mental health services
- Provide a permanent midwifery base and antenatal clinics
- Increase paediatric speech and language sessions
- Provide consultant paediatrician and community paediatrician outpatient sessions
- Provide a school nursing and health visiting service
- Offer community dental accommodation with potential to attract an NHS salaried dentist.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog will be crucial to the future health and well-being of the local population of Blaenau Ffestiniog and I was delighted to be at the official opening today.

"This is an important model for primary and community services that we could potentially look to replicate at other facilities in NHS Wales."

£26m EU-backed investment to help young people into work and training

The funding package, which includes £17.5m of EU money, will be used to fund 3 schemes aimed at helping 7,000 young people aged 16-24 years from across Wales access training and job opportunities.

This latest announcement brings the total investment in young people through EU programmes for 2014-2020 to £193m. Speaking at an event in Swansea to mark the progress and achievements of EU funds in Wales, and the 60th anniversary of the European Social Fund (ESF), Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford, said:

“I am delighted we have so far invested £193m of EU funds to help our young people unlock their potential and improve their career prospects. These projects are further examples of the importance of Wales receiving replacement funding from the UK government post-Brexit, so that we can continue supporting young people, helping them secure a prosperous future.”

The schemes set to go ahead are:

- Inspire2Work
- Ad Trac
- Cam Nesa

The schemes will provide tailored support for young people facing significant challenges. They will offer one to one mentoring, help with basic and personal skills as well as digital literacy and self esteem, so that young people are able to gain qualifications, enter further education and secure employment.

The £10m Inspire2Work project, backed with £6.7m from the ESF, will be led by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Newport City Council. It will offer advice, support and training to young people in Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Torfaen, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Newport and Monmouthshire.

The £5.7m Cam Nesa project, backed with £4m ESF and led by Pembrokeshire County Council, will deliver advice, support and training across south west Wales, while the £10.4m Ad Trac project, led by Grwp Llandrillo-Menai and backed with £6.8m EU funds, will deliver these services across North Wales.

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan, said:

“Many young people face significant barriers in securing work

because they do not have the appropriate skills or support they require to help them succeed. These schemes will help them gain self confidence and develop the skills they need to overcome these barriers and secure employment.”

[First Minister meets with First Secretary](#)

The First Minister began the meeting by expressing his support for the Prime Minister’s criticism of President Trump. There was agreement around the table that no truck could be given to any propagation of hate propaganda.

On Brexit, both sides recognised that progress had been made since the last meeting. A detailed discussion about future frameworks was positive and demonstrated a developing and serious attempt to resolve differences.

There are clearly still obstacles to overcome before the Welsh Government can recommend supporting the Withdrawal Bill, and it was acknowledged that there are opportunities for the UK government to make changes to the proposed legislation as it passes through Parliament.

The First Minister reiterated his central message that he is not looking to frustrate Brexit, and recognises the importance of respecting the referendum result. However, both the final deal and resulting legislation must reflect the economic and constitutional priorities of Wales.

[Pioneer schools report shows journey of improvement](#)

A [report](#) published today shows that the schools feel more supported and confident in their work developing six different Areas of Learning and Experience – the subject areas that will make up the new curriculum to be rolled out from 2022.

Interviews carried out as part of research with the pioneer schools revealed that they felt confident that they understood the aims and objectives of their AoLE groups and were happy with how they were being run. They also felt sufficiently supported to progress independently and work with other schools.

Responding to today's report, Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

"Our Pioneer Schools are at the heart of the process of designing the new curriculum. That's why it's so important for us to listen to their views and act on them accordingly.

"There will always be challenges when introducing a new curriculum but it's encouraging to know that schools are feeling confident and supported in taking this vital work forwards. There is a clear sense of momentum here and it demonstrates that our approach is the right one.

"We will continue to monitor progress, listen on where and how we can improve and ensure that the curriculum is fully fit for purpose when we start rolling it out in 2022."

[New teaching standards for further education and work-based learning workforce](#)

The [standards](#) will set high expectations for all practitioners and be more explicit about the role of high-quality collaborative professional learning to support improvements. They reflect the importance of ongoing professional learning for staff and the role vocational learning plays in creating the skilled, innovative and adaptable workforce Wales needs.

Speaking at the conference, Eluned Morgan Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning said:

"Vocational learning is every bit as important as academic education and if we want the best for our vocational learners their teachers, tutors and assessors have to be supported in their role. These new standards set out a clear, aspirational framework for the sector to work to.

"The critical principle of vocational education is that those working in both FE and WBL tend to operate as dual professionals, as experts both in a 'vocation' and as 'teachers'. This has been made a central strand throughout the standards.

"I am confident that these standards will further engage and motivate practitioners and their employers in their pursuit for excellence and improved outcomes for all."

Kelly Edwards Head of Work Based Learning Quality at the National Training Federation Wales said:

“The Work-based Learning sector was delighted to be involved in the development of the new standards. The standards will support professional learning for WBL practitioners, with a key focus on developing the dual professional. We welcome the standards as an important step to enhance professional recognition for the WBL sector in Wales.”

Iestyn Davies, Chief Executive of ColegauCymru, Wales’ post compulsory education charity, added:

“The development of professional standards is a move which is welcomed by ColegauCymru. Further Education provides the practical skills and knowledge that communities rely upon, we fully endorse and will promote these standards as a way of ensuring that the public and the profession alike are clear on what is required to continue to deliver world class skills in the rapidly changing world of work.”