

Carers Rights Day: Welsh Government unveil new plans to improve the lives of carers

To mark Carers Rights Day, the Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, has reaffirmed the Welsh Government commitment to carers with £1m to address three new national priorities to further improve the support available to carers by focusing on the issues that matter most to them.

There are 370,000 carers in Wales – around 12% of the population. They provide 96% of the care in the communities across Wales and contribute more than £8.1bn to the Welsh economy every year.

In Wales, under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, which came into force in 2016, carers have an equal right to have their needs assessment as those they care for. If carers have eligible needs, the local authority must meet those needs through a carers support plan.

The three national priorities are:

- Supporting life alongside caring – All carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- Identifying and recognising carers – Carers deserve to be recognised and supported so that they can continue to care. It is vital that carers identify themselves as carers.
- Providing information, advice and assistance – It is important that carers receive the right information and advice when they need it and in an appropriate format.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“To mark Carers rights day, I want to say thank you to the thousands of unpaid carers of all ages across Wales for their ongoing dedication, contribution and the invaluable difference they make to those they care for, their families, and the wider community.

“We know that making the difference sometimes means a carers’ own health and wellbeing can become neglected and we cannot let this happen.

“The Welsh Government is firmly committed to ensuring the rights of all unpaid carers are enhanced and protected. Our vision for carers in Wales is one where communities foster a carer friendly approach, identifying and supporting carers so that they are not disadvantaged or discriminated as a result of their caring role.

“For every carer, no matter how many hours of care they provide, caring must be a positive experience where carers feel confident in their caring role and supported to maintain a normal life as possible.”

[Journey's End arrives in Wales for premiere](#)

Starring Internationally-recognised actors Sam Claflin, Paul Bettany, Toby Jones and Asa Butterfield and set in 1918 in the trenches on the front line, the film has already held successful screenings at Toronto International Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival but this will be its first showing in Wales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“It’s fantastic to see Journey’s End premiering here in Wales, with this showing particularly timely as we mark the centenary of the end of the First World War.

“I’m delighted to have supported the delivery of yet another high end production in Wales, boosting regional economies and local jobs whilst promoting Wales as a fantastic place to work, visit and film in the process.

“The screening reflects what has been an extremely busy and successful year for Wales Screen and our Creative Sector team, with more than £41 million in production spends recorded in Wales – testament to the skills we have on our doorstep and the stature Wales now holds within the Sector.”

Culture Minister, Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas said:

“Wales continues to punch above its weight when it comes to high end TV and film production.

“Recent years have seen Wales become further established in helping deliver dramas and films of the very highest quality, with Sherlock, Doctor Who, Da Vinci’s Demons and Born to Kill, amongst others, all made here in Wales.

“I’m delighted, today, that we are able to add Journey’s End to that list, and look forward to its cinema release in February.”

The screening this evening will offer BAFTA members and invited guests the opportunity to see the film before release. Hannah Raybould, Director BAFTA Cymru said:

“We’re very much looking forward to screening this new feature which was filmed on location and at Pinewood Studios in Wales, offering access to students from local universities. This ties in perfectly with our ethos of celebrating new Welsh content. It will be the culmination of a year of events to inspire the next generation of creative talent interested in working in film and television here in Wales.”

Cancer services in Wales continue to improve

The NHS in Wales is diagnosing and treating more patients for cancer within target time than ever before. An additional 1,800 people were treated within target time compared to five years ago.

Despite demand for cancer services rising at around 1.5% a year, the Annual Statement shows performance has remained stable over the past few years and there have been improvements in some areas.

The statement shows in 2016/17:

- Of these, 15,912 (93%) were treated within target. This is 1,705 (12%) more than five years ago (2011-12)
- For the first time more than 72% of people diagnosed with cancer between 2010 and 2014 survived at least one year
- The Wales cancer patient experience survey showed 93% of respondents rated their care positively
- Key workers were allocated in 86% of cases compared to 66% in 2013.

Speaking ahead of his keynote address at the Wales Cancer Conference in Cardiff, Vaughan Gething said:

“As life expectancy increases, more of us will develop cancer in our lifetime.

“Cancer has become the single biggest cause of premature death in Wales and the UK. We need to educate and support people to reduce their risk of developing cancer, by quitting smoking, improving diets and levels of physical activity, as well as reducing harmful drinking and UV exposure. We must not forget that around 4-in-10

cancers are potentially preventable.

“For people who develop cancer we need to ensure the service are there to support them and treat them. We will continue to invest in cancer services and work with the NHS to improve the quality of care and patient outcomes.

“In order to achieve this, we have been working hard to ensure that all cancer patients have timely and appropriate treatment. This has involved considerable work over recent years and the development of a new single cancer pathway.

“Today I would like to move that debate on and expect all health boards, in addition to improving performance on the two existing pathways, to start shadow reporting the new single pathway for cancer.

“The new pathway will start from the point of suspicion of cancer for all patients. If the new pathway proves to be successful and there is confidence it is a better way of measuring cancer waiting times, then our ambition is to replace the two current waiting times targets with this new single cancer pathway. We will listen carefully to patients and clinicians before making any changes.

“The proposals have been clinically led and have wide support across the clinical community. We hope the new way of measuring people’s waits for cancer treatment will help NHS bodies to improve performance, quality and the efficiency of cancer services.

“Today’s report and the announcement of the new pathway are part of our wider approach to improving cancer services. Our over-arching ambition is to close the gap in outcomes with our international peers. To achieve this, we have in place significant focus on waiting times, service reform and detecting more cancers at earlier, more treatable stages.”

Mark Drakeford responds to the UK government’s Autumn Budget

The Autumn Budget includes approximately £1bn of additional capital funding for Wales between 2017-18 and 2020-21 – but more than half of this must be repaid to the UK Treasury.

The UK Budget also includes additional revenue funding of £215m for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“While these small increases in the resources available to Wales are to be welcomed as they will help support our priorities, this additional funding will do little to ease the pressures on frontline public services, which have been struggling to cope as a result of the successive cuts to our budget we have experienced since 2010-11.

“Even with this additional funding, the Welsh Government’s budget will be 5% lower in real terms in 2019-20 than it was in 2010-11.

“As a result of the measures the Chancellor announced today the funding Wales receives from the block grant will increase. But more than half of this increase is in the form of funding which must be paid back to the UK Treasury. £650m of the additional capital funding is in the form of financial transactions – this is a form of capital funding which must be repaid to the Treasury and there are tight restrictions on what it can be spent on.”

The Finance Secretary said the budget was also a missed opportunity to provide additional investment in infrastructure to support the economy during this period of uncertainty.

Professor Drakeford said:

“The Office for Budget Responsibility has confirmed the UK economy has slowed markedly and its growth forecasts have again been revised downwards. In my recent letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I urged the UK government to listen to the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to take advantage of low interest rates and invest in economic infrastructure.

“This is why we called on the UK government to commit to important infrastructure projects in Wales, including the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon. Once again the UK government has failed Wales by failing to invest in key projects.”

He added that the UK Budget gave little detail regarding additional funding about UK government plans to cut the public sector pay cap and give public sector workers a much-needed pay rise.

“The Welsh Government, standing with our hard working public sector workers and trade unions, has repeatedly called on the UK government to lift the public sector pay cap and provide additional funding to give workers across the UK the pay rise they deserve. I was clear this must be fully funded.

"Today's Budget was a missed opportunity to do this for all public sector workers. For NHS staff who are waiting the outcome of the independent pay review body, I expect the Chancellor to honour his commitment to fund any pay recommendations in full and to provide a full Barnett consequential."

The Cabinet Secretary also said there must now be discussions between the Welsh and UK governments about the UK government's intention to explore a tax on plastics – the Welsh Government is currently investigating a disposable plastic tax as one of 4 new tax ideas.

"I am pleased the UK government is taking our lead in considering how to use taxation to change behaviour in areas such as disposable plastic.

"I announced a tax on disposable plastic as part of the shortlist of proposed taxes in October, I expect to discuss this in detail with the UK government as part of its evidence gathering."

[Awards for the best in the Tourism industry](#)

The awards are hosted by Visit Wales to celebrate the best of the tourism industry – showcasing Wales' tourism businesses and the industry's achievements.

The awards ceremony will be held on Thursday, 8 March 2018 at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport and nominations are now being invited in a range of categories.

Categories for the awards are

- Best Hotel
- Best Bed & Breakfast
- Best Self-Catering
- Best Caravan, Camping or Glamping,
- Best Attraction
- Best Activity
- Best Event
- Best Place to Eat
- Best Destination
- Young Tourism Person of the Year
- Tourism Business Innovation Award.

The winners from regionally hosted awards will go through to the National Awards in March. The Tourism Minister, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, attended the North Wales Tourism Awards last week, where some of the first regional entries to the National Awards were announced.

Speaking about the awards, the Tourism Minister, said:

“The North Wales Tourism awards were a fantastic success and it is great to see the winners going on to compete in the Wales awards.

I’d encourage all tourism businesses across the rest of Wales to nominate themselves for these awards; the effort in entering awards can pay dividends and can be of great benefit to team and staff morale. Of course, being able to say that you’re the ‘Best in Wales’ is also a great marketing boost.

“The quality of what we have to offer here in Wales goes from strength to strength and the Awards are an opportunity for us all to celebrate the industry and to showcase the outstanding quality of our vibrant tourism sector.

“This is our opportunity to put tourism in the limelight and pay tribute to those who are committed and passionate about their businesses, tourism and Wales.”

Speaking at the Go North Wales Tourism Awards last week, Managing director Jim Jones said the quality of entries this year underlined why the region was increasingly being recognised as a world class destination which generates £2.8 billion every year and employs around 40,000 people.

He said:

“It’s been very successful and I congratulate all the winners. However, in my eyes every nominee is a winner and all have played a part in what has been a successful year for North Wales Tourism.

“This event really showcases the very best of North Wales and we have seen so many amazing entries. A number of the winners will now go forward to represent North Wales at the Visit Wales National Awards in 2018 and I wish them every success.”

Tourism businesses can nominate themselves or anyone can enter a business which they deem as a worthy winner. Further information is available [here](#) (external link). The closing date for applications is Friday, 12 January 2018.