

“Physical punishment has no place in a modern and progressive Wales” – Huw Irranca-Davies

To mark Universal Children’s Day, the Minister has re-affirmed the Welsh Government’s plans to introduce legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment. If passed by the National Assembly for Wales, it means that children in Wales will be protected under the law from physical punishment.

The Minister outlined his commitment to engage with the public and interested stakeholders on the proposed law through a formal consultation in the New Year.

The Welsh Government has been engaging with parents through its #TalkParenting campaign, with nearly 1,000 responses so far to an online survey on parenting.

Speaking ahead of an event in Swansea to mark Universal Children’s Day, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The Welsh Government is rightly proud of its record of promoting children’s rights and working to ensure all children in Wales have the best start in life.

“As Minister for Children, I’ll work to ensure the rights of every child and young person in Wales are respected so they can grow up to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

“When the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 was passed, it broke new ground. We were brave enough to be the first in the UK, and amongst only a few in Europe and the World, to put such arrangements in place. I’m determined to continue to deliver on this commitment.

“Our understanding of what is needed to protect and support children and their families has changed considerably over the years, and societal norms have changed as a result. It can no longer be acceptable in a modern and progressive society for children to be physically punished. It is right that as a Government, we take action to protect children and support parents to use positive and effective alternatives to physical punishment.”

Boosting skills would drive UK growth and productivity

19/11/2017 – The United Kingdom has record-high employment levels and very low jobless rates compared to most OECD countries. However, labour productivity growth remains weak and the job prospects of many adults are hurt by their poor literacy and numeracy skills. To boost growth, productivity and earnings, the UK should encourage lifelong learning among adults and promote better skills utilisation, according to a new OECD report.

[Getting Skills Right: United Kingdom](#) says that educational attainment has been rising in the UK, with 42% of adults having a tertiary degree, compared with 34% across the OECD. Sixteen per cent graduate in the field of sciences, more than in any other OECD country, and nearly half of science graduates are women.

The share of young adults enrolled in vocational education and training has risen to 43% but remains lower than in many other European countries. Apprenticeships are also less popular, pursued by around 24% of upper secondary students, compared to 59% in Switzerland or 41% in Germany.

Recent reforms to the regulation of apprenticeships should bring training content more in line with employer needs. The new apprenticeship levy should also encourage employers to take more responsibility for training, but care should be taken to prioritise quality of apprenticeship training to discourage employers simply rebadging existing training as an apprenticeship, according to the report.

Challenges remain in matching skill supply with skill demand in the UK. A high proportion of jobs remain low-skilled while the proportion that are high-skilled remains low relative to the increasing supply of workers with higher level qualifications. Among the countries covered by the OECD Survey of Adult Skills, the UK is only behind Spain in terms of the share of jobs that require lower-level qualifications (22%) while demand for higher level qualifications falls short of supply, with only a third of jobs requiring a tertiary education.

About 40% of British workers are either over-qualified or under-qualified for their job, and the same number are working in a field of study different to the one in which they studied in school. Furthermore, the OECD Skills for Jobs database reveals shortage pressure in knowledge related to education and training, health services and STEM subjects. More efforts are needed to improve skills utilisation and to stimulate innovation and growth in knowledge sectors, says the report.

Among the OECD's recommendations are that the UK should:

Strengthen career guidance services. There should be more interactions between employers and secondary schools and access to career guidance services should be extended to cover employed workers as well as the unemployed.

Encourage lifelong learning. Advanced Learner Loans could be made more attractive for low-skilled workers by tying repayment waivers to employment in some shortage occupations. Personal learning accounts or paid training leave for in-demand skills could also help.

Enhance awareness about the value of training. More efforts need to be made to convince employers of the return on investment of training. Group schemes may also encourage more small and medium-sized firms to offer training.

For more information, journalists should contact [Katharine Mullock](#) of the OECD Skills and Employability division (tel. + 33 1 45 24 19 17) or the [OECD Media Division](#) (tel. + 33 1 45 24 97 00).

Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

[New Routes to Showcase the Best of Wales](#)

The launch of 'The Wales Way' – a family of three national scenic touring routes that cross the country's most epic landscapes, showcasing its fascinating history, coastlines and attractions – is the first phase of a ten year programme.

The Wales Way is the umbrella name for three initial routes, celebrating key tourism products and experiences along the North Wales Way, the Coastal Way and the Cambrian Way.

Welsh Government, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, said:

"The idea for The Wales Way was founded on the basis of a manifesto commitment to develop a Cultural Corridor along the A55 in North Wales.

"We now have three routes celebrating Wales' culture, countryside and coast, and mirroring our tourism themed years including Year of Adventure 2016, Year of Legends 2017 and Year of the Sea 2018. The

Wales Way is also about encouraging visitors to immerse themselves in their own journeys of discovery, and this will be reinforced through our Year of Discovery 2019.

“Our aim is to attract more international visitors to Wales – last year, we saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years which was excellent news. However, in this tough, global market place we need to do more to grow our market share of visitors to Wales.

“We know that the concept of national routes – which is used worldwide can really inspire visitors and give them the confidence to explore more of a country – and stay longer.

“The routes will encourage visitors to stop and visit different places, areas, attractions and products which will enable our visitors to get a deeper understanding of Wales and will benefit the local tourism industry too.”

The Campaign was unveiled to influential travel trade and media contacts at the World Travel Market in London’s ExCEL, with the help of Aston Martin. Visit Wales have teamed up with Aston Martin to offer prize draw to win an amazing Aston Martin driving experience and a mini break in two of Wales’ finest luxury hotels, which will be promoted at the World Travel Market.

Aston Martin, which is in the process of opening its second UK plant in St Athan Nr Cardiff, has partnered with Visit Wales on the launch of The Wales Way. Dr Andy Palmer CMG, President and CEO of Aston Martin, said:

“We’re incredibly impressed by everything Wales has to offer and my team has had a fantastic time exploring and filming on its roads. We’re very proud to be able to help launch these routes and look forward to welcoming visitors from the world over to experience them for themselves.”

Minister for Culture Sport and Tourism, Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas, said:

“The Wales Way is an excellent initiative which draws together all that Wales has to offer – encouraging people to explore more of Wales. The Wales Way has the potential to be considered one of the top tourist routes in the world, and I look forward to working with the industry as the project evolves.”

The family of three routes meander – and has been based on the idea of going igam-ogam – through the very best of Wales’ landscapes and attractions, allowing visitors to unearth the country’s gems and unique experiences.

Unlike other world-famous routes, the Wales Way isn’t confined to driving;

they offer rail connections, walking paths, cycling routes and horse riding trails.

Digital company secures £2m in export orders

Object Matrix is famous for its Digital Content Governance platform, MatrixStore, which stores digital content and provides protection and governance for its lifetime.

The MatrixStore platform can service organisations in any market, but is currently being predominantly used by companies that create, curate and distribute digital video content. These include major players such as NBC Universal, France Televisions, Orange and EDF, along with many others.

The Economy Secretary said:

“Object Matrix’s work to secure over £2m of trade from a wide range of international markets is real achievement and I would like to warmly congratulate the directors and employees of the company on their success.

“The Welsh Government has worked closely with Object Matrix, providing support and advice to help the company develop and grow the export arm of its business.

“Its continued success is a great example to others and shows that given the right advice and support, many businesses in Wales can successfully expand their operations by seeking to penetrate new markets.”

Nick Pearce-Tomenius, Object Matrix Sales and Marketing Director said:

“Content providers, whether they be large broadcasters, or small companies using a little bit of video, naturally need somewhere to protect that video. But more than that, they need to ensure they can still easily access archived content whilst keeping that content secure with little or no management effort.

“MatrixStore does just that, as well as providing automated and integrated business continuity functionality, so even when the worst happens and all power is lost, for example, you can still manage that content.

“The platform offers several benefits for organisations that require archive storage, content curation, distribution at scale and would like their staff to work on higher value functions. It provides, on-site, off-site or private cloud deployment that can grow and scale with requirements, robust and proven disaster recovery, a business continuity platform, and high levels of security.”

Object Matrix initially focused on developing sales within the UK market. In 2009, after a successfully securing a number of customers, including the BBC, BT and Gorilla, it began to look at exporting, and visited its first market, France.

Nick explains:

“It is good to prove yourselves locally before you can be successful globally. With good established customers in the UK, exporting was a natural progression for our business. It has helped transform our business, not only through increasing sales but by getting to grips with the challenges of new markets and new trends.

“Exporting can seem daunting at first, but the key lessons we have learned is the importance of good partners, perseverance and visiting your market. Also, access the support that is available. We have definitely benefited from advice and support from the Welsh Government.”

[Health Secretary hails success of Welsh Government campaign as all GP training places filled](#)

Following the conclusion of all three rounds of recruitment in 2017, the Wales Deanery has now confirmed the appointment of 144 GP training places, surpassing the 136 places available. This compares to 121 places that were filled in 2016 – an increase of 19%.

It follows the launch of an international and UK-wide campaign to promote Wales as an excellent place for doctors – including GPs – to train, work and live.

The campaign includes two financial incentives schemes: a targeted scheme

offering a £20,000 incentive to GP trainees taking up posts in specified areas with a trend of low fill rates, and a universal scheme offering a one off payment for all GP trainees to cover the cost of one sitting of their final examinations.

Ceredigion, North East Wales, North West Wales and Pembrokeshire, areas that have traditionally found it difficult to recruit have benefited from the targeted incentive scheme, achieving 100% fill rates this year.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“I am delighted we’ve filled all the GP training places for Wales this year, and in particular some of the traditionally hard to recruit rural areas. It shows our marketing campaign has been a great success and Wales really is a great place to train, work and live.

There are a number of benefits for doctors coming to Wales, including an Education Contract for junior doctors, the first in the UK. It guarantees ring-fenced time for learning within the working week to ensure trainee doctors will have access to a wide range of educational opportunities to support their career development.

The campaign was recently extended to encourage trainee psychiatrists to come to Wales, which is a particular recruitment challenge across the whole of the UK.

I was pleased to re-launch the medical campaign in October. I have also approved the continuation of the incentives we have put in place for GP trainees. I expect the campaign to go from strength to strength and attract even more doctors to Wales.”