

A-level and Welsh Bacculaureate students congratulated by Kirsty Williams

This year's A-level results show:

- 75.3% gained A* to C, the highest since 2009, with 25% achieving A*-A.
- In maths, Wales again outperformed England at A* and A* to C, with 19.4% gaining A*, and 80.4% gaining A* to C.
- There have been increases at A* in Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
- At A* to C the results have gone up in Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography.
- For All Subjects the performance of both male and females learners has improved across all of the grades.

The Welsh Bacculaureate results show:

- 94.1% of candidates achieved the Skills Challenge Certificate.
- 77.5% of candidates passed the Advanced Welsh Bacculaureate.

Over the last year the Welsh Government has taken action to improve A-level results. This includes working with regional consortia, reviewing performance measures and ensuring professional learning support programmes are available for staff.

On a visit to John Frost School in Newport, Kirsty Williams said:

"I want to congratulate everyone receiving their results and thank pupils, teachers and staff for all their hard work.

"These set of results show an encouraging increase in the number achieving the top grades, with improvement in results across maths, biology, chemistry and physics.

"We have also seen the results go up across a range of subjects and I want us to continue to build on this.

"I am committed to making sure our education system provides pupils with the skills and knowledge they need for the modern world.

"Our ongoing reform of A-levels is an important part in our national mission to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people."

Plans to halve Wales' food waste announced by Lesley Griffiths

Wales has made significant progress in recent years in reducing the amount of food we unnecessarily throw away. Recent figures, published by WRAP, show a reduction of household food waste in Wales of 12% between 2009 and 2015. Wales' household waste is now lower than the rest of the UK by around 9%.

The Cabinet Secretary today confirmed in order to build on this progress, she intends to launch a consultation on a non-statutory target for Wales to halve food waste by 2025, against a 2006-07 baseline.

Lesley Griffiths made the announcement as she welcomed the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, to Wales. Scotland was the first country in the UK to set a food waste reduction target.

Both Cabinet Secretaries will share views and information around waste and resource management. Lesley Griffiths is keen to hear the Scottish Government's experience of setting a food waste target and will discuss with Roseanna Cunningham how Wales has achieved its success in municipal waste recycling. The visit comes a week before the release of provisional annual waste statistics for 2016/17, where Wales expects to improve on last year's rate of 60% – the third highest in the world.

The Cabinet Secretaries will also discuss their commitment to developing a more circular economy, an approach where high-quality materials derived from waste products can be supplied back to manufacturers and productively used again and again.

Lesley Griffiths and Roseanna Cunningham will visit Newport WasteSavers, a social enterprise that promotes the importance of reuse and recycling, and Public Health Wales' new office in Cardiff, which has been refurbished with the use of repaired and recycling furniture and tiles, an excellent example of the circular economy in action. PHW's refit recently won the organisation an international award for Environmental Best Practice.

Ahead of the visits, Lesley Griffiths said:

“I am very much looking forward to welcoming my counterpart in the Scottish Government, Roseanna Cunningham to Wales to compare our approaches to waste management.

“In Wales we are well on our way to achieving our ambitious target to become a zero waste nation by 2050. Recycling is at an all time record high and our 60% recycling rate is bettered by just two

other countries in the world.

“We are keen to build on this success and one area where we believe improvements can be made is food waste. If just half of all the food and dry recyclables found in Wales’ bins were recycled, Wales would reach its 2025 recycling target of 70 per cent nine years early. The consultation I intend to launch will examine the potential to halve food waste by 2025. It is an ambitious target but I know, from our recycling performance in recent years, when we work closely with local authorities and householders we can achieve results that make the world stand up and take notice.”

Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Roseanna Cunningham said:

“We welcome the Welsh Government’s steps to tackle food waste which will help save households money, reduce emissions and contribute to the circular economy.

“In Scotland we are committed to reducing food waste by 33% by 2025 which could lead to significant savings for everyone – avoidable food waste costs Scotland £1 billion per year or £460 per household.

“Through our Love Food Hate Waste campaign to encourage people to reduce waste in their homes, the roll out of a doggy bag scheme in restaurants and the introduction of legislation which requires local authorities to provide food waste recycling points, we are working with households, retailers and the industry to help reach our target.”

Lights, Camera, Action: Technical Theatre apprenticeship pilot has a successful stage debut

The pilot aimed to establish new routes into backstage training in theatres across Wales by delivering practical, work based skills.

Eight women and men took part in the Technical Theatre Apprenticeship Programme, which helped them to develop their skill-set and gain qualifications across lighting, sound and stagecraft to support the effective delivery of theatre performances.

The pilot was run by Wales Millennium Centre, with sponsorship from Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) and financial support from the Welsh Government. It also involved a number of other theatres across Wales which provided placements for the apprentices during their training and development; with the apprentices returning to the Centre every few weeks for in depth knowledge and Essential Skills Wales (ESW) sessions.

Alex Davies, 19, from Milford Haven is one of the apprentices who took part in the pilot. During his apprenticeship he was based at The Torch Theatre, Pembrokeshire, and since completing the programme has secured employment with that theatre under a full-time contract.

Commenting on his experience, Alex said:

“I was brought into Technical Theatre by my Grandfather, who has now sadly passed away, he had started his own theatre company and trained me to be their tech, although all work was voluntary. As I progressed I started doing some work for Torch Theatre, under casual hours. When the apprenticeship was introduced I was asked by the Torch if I was interested in partaking. The apprenticeship really allowed me to further the skills I had been learning and work on much bigger projects with much bigger teams I was able to work doing what I really enjoyed and earned money at the same time.

“The apprenticeship was beneficial to me and I would highly recommend the scheme to other people interested in working in technical theatre. It gives you the chance to learn on the job and if you show a good attitude towards the work you’ll do well. The apprenticeship lead to a job at the Torch for me as I had proven myself to them that I was an asset to the tech team, now I will be given more responsibilities for oncoming shows and continue to learn more and better myself to move to bigger and better things in the future.”

Since commencing their apprenticeships in July last year all of those involved with the pilot have now achieved their Level 3 Technical Theatre qualification, gained the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) Bronze Award in Theatre Practice, Flying & Electrics and gone on to secure employment – seven within theatres across Wales and one has set up their own sound-engineering business.

Welcoming the success of the pilot, Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, said:

“Apprenticeships are the start of an exciting and rewarding career and can benefit anyone of any age; giving them an opportunity to gain practical, on the job experience while gaining all the skills and qualifications they need.

“Wales’ creative industries have gone from strength-to-strength

over recent years, gaining global recognition. There are now 50,000 people working across the sector and it is worth over £825 million to the Welsh economy.

“Ensuring we continue to nurture and develop skills talent, especially in highly specialist areas such as technical theatre support which has seen a decline in take-over recent years, is vitally important if we are to continue to support the future of this sector.

“I am delighted this new, innovative apprenticeship pilot between the Welsh Government and its partners has proved so successful and I look forward to seeing how it develops. It is a great opportunity for anyone considering a career within in the creative industries, especially if the higher education route is not for them, and I would encourage everyone to apply.”

Mathew Milsom, Managing Director of Wales Millennium Centre said:

“As a landmark arts venue and leading producer, we are seeking to raise the aspiration of young people across Wales. We are committed to the nurturing of new talent – both on and off the stage – and I believe that this apprenticeship scheme, along with The Centre’s creative learning programme, will help develop self-belief and creative skills in young people.

“Through the technical theatre apprenticeship scheme we are discovering and developing the ‘behind the scenes’ theatre stars of the future and I’m immensely proud of our first group of trainees who have worked extremely hard and have, as a result, secured work in the industry.”

Andrew Whitcombe, Cardiff and Vale College’s Dean of Work Based Learning said:

“This has been a unique experience for CAVC and our work based learning Consortium the Quality Skills Alliance. This shared apprenticeship is a real partnership with industry experts (WMC) delivering actual production experience and skills supported by the colleges expertise in academic provision. For the college this has been a substantive collaborative effort giving young people a gateway to an exciting career in a dynamic industry, with transferable skills as well.”

More information about the Technical Theatre apprenticeship programme, including how to apply for the 2017/18 Theatre Technician vacancies which start in October 2017, is available via the [Careers Wales Matching Service website](#).

£500,000 to improve eating disorder services for young people in Wales

The funding will help improve the services available for young people and their families when they transfer from the care of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Services for treating eating disorders.

Currently, CAMHS services deliver a family-based treatment approach up to age of 18, whereas adults' services deliver an individualised model of treatment from the 18th birthday, which may or may not include the involvement of family members in the treatment.

Funding will enable the recruitment of new specialist staff and for existing specialist staff to increase the time available to support young people with eating disorders.

The overall vision is to create a transitional service which is embedded into the adult eating disorders service and actively reaches into and co-works with colleagues from CAMHS services.

Funding will facilitate the blending of some services such as home/community support and family-based treatments to ensure a seamlessly managed transition. It will also support enhanced training for existing staff and assist in setting up joint treatment interventions, including Multi-Family Group Therapy Programmes, Cognitive Remediation Therapy, and Family Support.

The additional funding announced today is in addition to £1.25m per annum the Welsh Government invests in wider eating disorder treatment services for children and adults across Wales.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"We're absolutely committed to supporting young people and adults in Wales with mental health issues, including eating disorders.

"Eating disorders comprise a range of highly complex mental illnesses, as well as being physically debilitating conditions in themselves, which is why early diagnosis and intervention is vital.

"The additional funding I'm announcing today will help ensure the services and treatment approach young people and their families' receive will not change when they transition from CAMHS into adult services.

"This will help ensure young people receive the care and support they need during what is an extremely difficult time for them and

their family. I hope the improvements this funding will support will make a real and positive difference to them.”

[Start ups in Wales benefit from over £15m of loans](#)

Latest figures from the UK wide Start Up Loans Company (SULCO) show that since the fund was established in Wales in October 2013, it has provided support and loans to 1943 new and early stage Welsh businesses, with an average lending amount of around £8000 per company.

The figures mean that over the last four years an average of two new Welsh businesses a day have benefitted from funding from the Start Up Loan Company.

Speaking about the latest figures, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Government is committed to encouraging entrepreneurship and start ups across Wales. However we recognise that the one thing holding most entrepreneurs back is their difficulty in accessing affordable finance and the right mentoring support.

“We are proud to support the UK Wide Start Up Loans Company which is partly delivered by the Welsh Government Business Wales service.

“Since its inception in 2012 the Start Up Loans Company fund has supported nearly 2000 start ups in Wales and it is really heartening to see the ongoing success of companies such as organic hair treatment specialists, Goji Hair in Cardiff, outdoor activity company, Waterfall Ways in Glynneath and Bite Wales – the Little Cheese Shop in Denbighshire.

“Their stories show just what can be achieved when drive,

ambition and flair are coupled with the right finance and support.”

Joanna Hill, Interim CEO at The Start Up Loans Company, said:

“Start-ups play an instrumental role in driving the growth of the economy, and it’s great to see such a demand for funding in Wales. The businesses we have helped launch span a range of sectors, and demonstrate the flair and diversity of the start-up community in Wales.

“We have helped fund over 2,000 start-ups in Wales since the scheme’s inception and it has been rewarding watching them grow to become successful, profitable businesses. Working in partnership with the Business Wales service we anticipate this momentum to continue, and we look forward to seeing more businesses start-up and thrive across the country.”