

Drive to improve education at heart of Estyn review

Estyn plays a key role in raising standards and the quality of teaching and education across the country through rigorous inspection and expert advice. The review will look at the implications of Wales's extensive education reforms for the future role of Estyn.

The review follows an exchange of letters between the Chief Inspector and the Cabinet Secretary, where they agreed that such a review would build on Estyn's strengths and improve the work of the Inspectorate further.

The review, which will be undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson, will begin in August and is due to report in early 2018.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"I am grateful to Meilyr for proposing this course of action. I fully support the proposals so that we continue to drive up standards in our education system.

"Our education reforms must be aligned to support the delivery of our new curriculum. I am therefore especially pleased that Professor Donaldson has agreed to take forward the review. He has a wealth of experience of conducting reviews of education systems around the world, including Australia, Portugal, Sweden and Japan."
"

Meilyr Rowlands, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, said:

"Significant changes are happening to the education landscape in Wales and inspection is also changing. With Estyn's mission to achieve excellence for all learners in Wales, we believe it will be helpful to gain an independent view from Professor Donaldson.

" I am pleased that the Cabinet Secretary has accepted my proposal and is supporting this review. "

Professor Donaldson said:

"Estyn has a vital part to play in the success of the reform programme in Wales. I am therefore pleased to have been asked, jointly by the Cabinet Secretary and the Chief Inspector, to undertake an independent review of the ways in which its

contribution to the reforms can best be realised.”

Professor Donaldson will present his report to Welsh Government and the Chief Inspector after gathering and analysing evidence on inspection, quality enhancement and accountability while supporting Estyn to refine and develop their practices.

The terms of reference for the review will be published shortly on Estyn’s website.

[Have your say in the development of potential new Welsh taxes](#)

He is urging people and organisations to come forward with ideas which could be developed into new Welsh taxes.

The Wales Act 2014 provides the Welsh Government with powers to put forward proposals for the development of new taxes in areas of devolved responsibility. These proposals must be agreed by the National Assembly, UK Government and both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

During a debate in the Senedd today, the Finance Secretary will outline his intention to test the new Wales Act powers and outline some of the tax ideas which have already been put forward by the Bevan Foundation. These include ideas around tourism and takeaway packaging and funding social care.

The Finance Secretary will also suggest that taxation could be used to change behaviours or to discourage activity which has negative social impacts.

The debate follows the passage of two tax Bills by the National Assembly for Wales, which pave the way for the introduction of two devolved taxes in April 2018 – land transaction tax, which replaces stamp duty land tax and landfill disposals tax, which replaces landfill tax.

Professor Drakeford will say:

“In nine months’ time the Welsh Government will raise our own taxes for the first time in almost 800 years. It marks a new relationship between the Welsh Government, the National Assembly, the Welsh taxpayer and devolved public services.

“The power to propose new taxes is an important lever, which we can use to change behaviours and deliver improvements for our communities. That is why I want to start a genuine debate about how we use these powers to support our commitment to fairness,

wellbeing and growth.

“A number of ideas have already been put forward in the Bevan Foundation’s report *Tax for Good*. Other ideas for new taxes to support Welsh ideas, such as a tax to fund social care have also been suggested.

“Alternatively, we could use these powers to change behaviour or decrease negative practices, such as targeting land-banking through a levy on unused land. New taxes also presents us with an opportunity to build on Wales’ strengths, where we could consider taxes which aim to increase levels of recycling or perhaps look at a tourism tax.

“I am keen to consider all ideas and want to start a conversation around new taxes – with all political parties; with the public; businesses and organisations across Wales. I urge everyone to get involved, share their ideas with us and help us shape future Welsh taxes.”

A shortlist of ideas for new Welsh taxes will be considered in the autumn.

To get involved and put forward your ideas, please email FinancialReformMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk .

“New Treatment Fund is delivering for the people of Wales” – Vaughan Gething

The New Treatment Fund makes £80 million available over the life of this government, £16m annually, to speed up access to the very latest medicines recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG).

Under the new system, all health boards in Wales are required to make a NICE or AWMSG recommended medicine available no later than two months from the date the final guidance is published, shortening the maximum amount of time before which a health board must make a treatment available by a third.

As of 9 June, there were 17 applicable medicines available under the New Treatment Fund.

Six health boards have made all 17 medicines available. One health board, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, made 15 of the 17 recommended medicines available within the two months, however all 17 medicines are now available.

Welcoming the progress made so far, Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m pleased that our new treatment fund is working, delivering swift access to innovative new medicines to support people with life-threatening conditions in Wales.

“In January, when I launched the New Treatment Fund, I said a concerted, joint effort was needed between the pharmaceutical industry, NHS Wales and Welsh Government to deliver a sustainable and responsive approach to the introduction of new medicines.

“This was illustrated effectively just last month when the new breast cancer treatment, Kadcyla™, was made available quickly because the manufacturer engaged with NHS Wales to secure an early agreement.

“It’s good to see we are making good progress, but I expect to see this continue over the five-year period of the fund.

“In the first two months, health board compliance showed some variation in the availability of recommended medicines. I am glad to see that has now been rectified and positive progress has been made so people in Wales can benefit from this potentially life changing policy.”

[Public Health Bill receives Royal Assent](#)

At an official sealing ceremony in Cardiff, the Public Health (Wales) Bill became an Act of the Assembly. A Bill receives Royal Assent when Letters Patent under the Welsh Seal signed with Her Majesty’s own hand signifying Her Assent are notified to the Clerk of the Assembly.

The radical Welsh law will extend smoke free areas to settings including school grounds and hospital grounds, and introduce a licensing scheme for procedures such as tattooing.

It will also place a duty on local authorities to produce a toilets strategy; require public bodies to consider how their decisions will affect people’s health; prohibit the intimate piercing of children; make pharmacy services more responsive to their communities; and place a duty on the Welsh Government to produce a national strategy on preventing and reducing obesity.

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones applied the Welsh Seal to the Letters Patent at the sealing ceremony, which was also attended by Public Health

Minister Rebecca Evans.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones, said:

“This radical legislation will help us improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

“It keeps pace with emerging public health concerns and has a strong focus on children, ensuring our young people grow up in a Wales that helps them stay safe and healthy.”

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

“This wide-ranging legislation will have a significant, lasting positive impact on health in Wales. It will make a real difference to people of all generations, from children who will be protected from the harms of second hand smoke and the dangers of intimate piercing, to older people who will benefit from better planning of public toilet provision.

“I would like to thank all of the partners who worked with us to develop this Act, and look forward to continuing to work with them as it is implemented.”

[Ken Skates takes action to support Tesco workers](#)

Tesco recently announced plans to close its Customer Contact Centre in Llanishen, with the potential loss of 1100 jobs.

The new Taskforce, which Ken Skates is keen to see established at the earliest possible opportunity, will see the key players gathered around one table to pool their knowledge and resources and ensure that as many of the 1100 people currently working at the centre are provided with the very best support should they need to find alternative employment.

The Economy Secretary said:

“I’ve been very clear about my deep disappointment over the proposed closure of this award winning Customer Contact Centre in Cardiff and also about the way this news was broken to staff.

Wales has a well-established support infrastructure in place for workers who are affected by redundancy and at times like this when one organisation is proposing to cut a high number of jobs, it is really helpful to get all the key players around one table so we can discuss the best and innovative ways of supporting affected workers.

This is a tried and tested approach as demonstrated by the success of a similar taskforce to support employees affected by the closure of the Murco site in Pembrokeshire and will ensure close partnership working with agencies, including Jobcentre plus and Careers Wales, Cardiff Council and our flagship ReAct 3 programme.

We are talking here about a highly employable, award winning workforce who I'm sure many companies in the area would be very keen to employ. I'm determined to do everything I can, working alongside our partners, to ensure that the impact of the potential closure on our workers and wider economy is kept to an absolute minimum."