

Looked after children must have same educational opportunities as their peers – Kirsty Williams

The Cabinet Secretary has reported on progress to better support the education of children who are looked after and outlined her plans for action to continue to raise their educational attainment and make sure they have the same opportunities as their peers.

An annual report on the three year plan for looked after children highlights the progress being made, including an improvement in GCSE results. In 2016 23 per cent of children who are looked after achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at grade A*–C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics, a 6 percentage points increase on 2015.

The Welsh Government has also worked with Cardiff University – CASCADE to create a new online hub to share information and resources focusing on children in care to help improve their educational outcomes.

The Education Secretary has committed to:

- Looking at the training available to schools and further education colleges with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Getting local authorities to review the roles of key workers with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Working with the third sector to consider better ways of supporting children who are often difficult to engage in education.
- Making better use of the data available to help looked after children.

The Education Secretary recently announced that the Pupil Development Grant will be extended to provide support to three year old looked after children during their early years in schools. This is part of more than £90m this year to help disadvantaged pupils.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Central to our national mission of education reform is for all children to do well and reach their potential, whatever their background. Looked after children must have the same opportunities as their peers. We have seen an excellent improvement in the GCSE results of those in care and we have committed more funding to build on this, but I want to go further.

“Children often enter care come from a background of family crisis or breakdown. While we can not change their personal experiences, we will continue to support them through their education and prepare them for adulthood.

“Research shows that all too often that simply by being ‘in care’ the expectations placed on these young people reduce. We are taking action to face this issue head on and will continue to do so.”

Contact centre Carpeo Estate Planning to create 300 jobs in Newport over the next five years with Welsh Government support

The new business will be based at a new contact centre in Newport where it plans to create 300 jobs with Welsh Government support.

The FCA-regulated organisation, currently employs 250 people in Swindon, and is opening the new branch at Cleppa Park, Duffryn. A location in Teeside was under consideration for this project but funding support from the Welsh Government secured the investment for Wales.

The centre opens in June and the business is actively recruiting 24 employees at all levels for its launch date, rising to 60 by end of the year and 300 by 2022.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This is Carpeo’s first investment in Wales and I am delighted the company is joining a growing and vibrant sector that employs more than 30,000 people in over 200 centres in Wales.

“Carpeo has ambitious growth plans with the potential for further future investment in Wales and I welcome their plan to open this new business in Newport that will create a range of jobs and training opportunities for local people.”

Carpeo Estate Planning’s Chief Executive Officer Mike Minahan said:

“Having sat on the board of the Welsh Contact Centre Forum for the past 15 years, I know that Wales has a range of competitive advantages to offer contact centre businesses. The quality of people available and their experience of working in a regulated services market is a huge pull. On the softer side, the Welsh accent is sympathetic and consoling, particularly important in our market.

“We’re hugely proud to be bringing these well-paid roles and good employment opportunities to Newport.”

For a small monthly fee, members of the new subscription-based Carpeo Estate Planning service have access to affordable wills and funeral planning products. Members can also access a discount portal enabling them to save thousands a year on key household purchases, including at supermarkets Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons and Asda.

Innovative software that has been tried and tested will be utilised to identify those people whom these products and services are particularly relevant and who would have had recent experience of the difficulties of executing an intestate estate. A potential market of 3 million people has been identified.

Sandra Busby, Managing Director, Welsh Contact Centre Forum, said:

“This announcement is further evidence of the attraction of Wales as a home for some of the most Innovative contact centre businesses around. Over the past two decades our role has been to build up

Wales as the destination of choice for organisations that want to run a successful contact centre.”

Carpeo’s turnover grew to £9.4M this financial year with plans to rapidly increase to £20M over the next four years, by expanding into Wales and potentially other areas of the UK.

Carpeo Estate Planning has partnered with Hugh James, the UK’s largest provider of will writing Services; Golden Leaves, the market leader in the provision of funeral plans, and professional advisory firm Broomfield & Alexander.

[Welsh Government introduces Bill amendment to protect rights of public sector workers](#)

The Welsh Government will amend its Trade Union Bill, at Stage 2 of the Bill’s passage through the National Assembly, to ensure current arrangements remain in place with regards to devolved public services.

The Trade Union (Wales) Bill will, when enacted, reverse the effect of certain provisions in the UK Government’s Trade Union Act 2016, in order to

protect and promote the successful Welsh model of social partnership.

The decision to introduce an amendment to the Bill follows a UK Government consultation on revoking the current legal position where employers are unable to use temporary workers to provide cover when staff take industrial action.

This would apply to industrial action taken by workers in all sectors, including workers employed in the public sector in Wales.

The Welsh Government has since consulted on whether the current position should be maintained in devolved public services and has subsequently decided to amend the Trade Union Bill to prevent the UK Government from legislating in this area.

Speaking ahead of today's Stage 1 Debate on the Trade Union Bill, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"We have long said that the UK Government's position is counterproductive -leading to prolonged, protracted disputes, greater confrontation and more disruption to some of the most vulnerable users of our vital public services.

"Although the UK Government has yet to enact legislation on agency workers, we have taken the necessary steps to ensure that, if they choose to do so, devolved public services would remain unaffected and that the current legal position would remain the same. We are acting to retain the status quo.

"Our Bill and the amendment we are introducing both have the very clear backing of the Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, with strong support for the proud tradition of constructive social partnership we have here in Wales. We are not prepared for this to be partnership to be jeopardised."

[Wales a popular choice with day visitors in 2017](#)

Figures published today show that Wales is continuing to attract more day visitors as the number of day trippers to Wales increases in addition to the amount of money they spend during their visit.

Tuesday 09 May 2017

In the 12 months ending March 2017, there were 104.6 million tourism day visits to Wales, with an associated spend of £4,346 million, this is an increase of more than 24% compared to the previous 12 months, while the amount spent has increased by 35%.

Commenting on the recent figures, the Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“In what is an extremely competitive market place, tourism in Wales is in a strong position. We’ve had two record breaking years and our aim is to sustain growth. It’s therefore great news that our day visit figures are showing an increase in 2017. We are working hard to sustain these levels of success through continued investment in marketing and product development.

“Campaign work continues to convert interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound into bookings for the summer. A boost to the Visit Wales budget means that there is £26.3m available to invest in marketing and product development this year enabling us to pull together a more ambitious programme than ever before for 2017.”

More information: [Great Britain Day Visits Survey](#).

[May 2017](#)

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[Report on Wales’ future landscapes published](#)

The Group was established to explore the recommendations of the Marsden Report into the future of Wales’ designated landscapes, which provided 69 recommendations, the range and scope of which were considerable.

The [report](#) says designated landscapes should be the leaders of the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas and emphasises the

importance of joint-working to achieve this.

It recommends the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and all designated landscapes provide assistance and support to other landscape managers across Wales, including landowners, farmers and the wider rural community, on issues such as biodiversity, access and protection, in order for the whole society to benefit fully from our landscapes.

The report acknowledges the challenges the UK's exit from the EU poses, with so much of Wales' environmental legislation tied into EU laws and the uncertainty over future funding for agriculture, at a time when action is needed to build the resilience of our eco-systems. It concludes that genuine partnership is needed to ensure the best outcome for Wales.

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas said:

“From the start the main feature of the working group was partnership, including everyone from national park authorities and areas of outstanding natural beauty, from agricultural and tourism businesses, voluntary organisations and trusts contributing equally to the discussions.

“The basic principle guiding our work is seeing and understanding the role of designated landscapes not as separate excluded areas, but as a distinctive part which could contribute to good practise for the rest of our country's landscape.”

The Welsh Government will now look at whether legislation needs to be changed to support the recommendations of the report. This includes looking at whether greater weight should be given to the importance of these areas and their ecosystems in decision making and whether governance arrangements should evolve to reflect local circumstances, rather than the current one-size-fits-all system.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

“Wales' landscape is a huge part of our identity and an important national asset. It attracts tourism, outdoor recreation and local employment. It delivers benefits to our health and well-being and has been identified as having huge potential for developing greener energy solutions.

“This is why it is so important we are making the most of our iconic landscape. There is much we can learn from each other as we navigate our way towards a future outside of the EU.

“I thank the group for their work on this report. The next step is to deliver against the ambition, not in isolation, but together as part of the collaborative approach.”