

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething announces all-Wales PrEP trial

The announcement follows the decision on Truvada® by the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group. The study will run for at least three years and will begin this summer.

Vaughan Gething said:

“There is no doubt that Truvada® reduces rates of HIV infection when taken correctly and supported by wider, preventative sexual health services can help to reduce overall HIV transmission and infection rates. This is the advice of the World Health Organisation.

“The study that I have announced will mean that all those for whom the drug is clinically appropriate can access it.

“The study will help us to learn how best to provide the preventative treatment to reduce risks of HIV transmission in Wales and answer some of the questions raised by the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group around incidence rates.

“The All Wales Medicines Strategy Group is a highly regarded, independent expert group. I acknowledge their advice that there are uncertainties regarding cost-effectiveness and that they have not recommended the drug for routine use within NHS Wales at this time.

“I am asking Public Health Wales and the HIV Expert Group to work together to deliver the study.”

Ken Skates keen to explore further A55 improvements

Recent years and months have seen the Welsh Government make significant improvements to the road but the Economy Secretary was keen to stress that more needs to be done in order for the road to best serve as a key artery across North Wales and beyond.

Ken Skates said:

“Last month saw the culmination of four years of imperative improvement work to tunnels on the A55, and this is alongside recent road surface improvements, flood alleviation work and urgent maintenance work.

“Following the completion of these improvements, all maintenance and improvement works for the medium to long term can now be carried out overnight, when disruptions are minimal. I’ve been clear that only emergency work will disrupt passengers during the day this summer, banning any planned daytime roadwork between J11 and the English border until September at the earliest.

“The investment in improving the condition of our roads and the major proposals we have in the pipeline to address congestion points on the network will greatly improve the travelling experience along the A55. I am, however, determined to look beyond these interventions, ensuring journeys along the A55 are as reliable as possible – delivering for locals, businesses and visitors alike. The resilience study I am commissioning will help determine how best to achieve this.

“My intention is to look again at all aspects of the road, identifying where and how best to improve the travel experience and how to minimise the frequency and impact of incidents and breakdowns. This will complement existing plans for improvements whilst continuing to ensure the disruption of roadworks are kept to an absolute minimum.

“Over 70,000 cars use sections of the A55 at peak times and this study will help the Welsh Government continue to drive improvements, ensuring the A55 copes with demand and helps facilitate a strong and forward looking North Wales economy.”

The resilience study will look at the whole network from Holyhead to Post House junction and the first stage of the work is intended to be completed late summer, feeding into the existing schedule for improvements commencing from September.

Four young Welsh experts to represent UK in the world’s largest Global Skills competition

Joseph Massey, 23, from Coleg Cambria; Alfie Hopkin, 18, from Llanelli, Elizabeth Forkuoh, 20, from Llanelli and Ethan Davies, 21, from Mynydd Isa

have been recognised as the UK's most highly skilled young people in their industry, and will travel almost 5,000 miles to the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) to compete against the best students, apprentices and employees in the world.

Held every two years, WorldSkills International sees more than one thousand young people, aged 18 to 25, come together from seventy-seven countries to compete for medals in fifty-one skill competitions, including CNC Milling, Restaurant Service, Web Design and Aeronautical Engineering.

As part of Team UK, these four Welsh youngsters will showcase their skills by demonstrating their technical abilities in specific tasks, which they study or conduct in their workplace, over the course of six days.

Elizabeth said:

“WorldSkills has enabled me to travel the UK and receive training from some of the best restaurants in the country. For example I've trained at the Ritz and Michel Roux Jnr's two Michelin star restaurant, where they actually offered me a job!

“I'm so excited to be able to compete on an international level, it's something I've dreamed about for years now and I can hardly believe I'll be going. Being part of the competition is such an amazing experience. From the people I've met and the new skills I've learnt, to the places I've travelled to and worked in, none of it would have been possible without WorldSkills.”

Joseph, Alfie, Elizabeth and Ethan were invited to compete in the selection process after excelling at the Skills Competition Wales and WorldSkills UK National Competitions, the finals of which take place at The Skills Show each November.

Backed by the Welsh Government through the European Social Fund, these competitions promote the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce and world-class individuals.

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James said:

“Congratulations to all four competitors on their way to represent the nation. The number of Welsh members in Team UK is a testament not only to their hard work and determination but also the support from their families, and training from Welsh colleges, training providers and employers.

“Wales has been competing in WorldSkills for many years and has nurtured some of the most highly-skilled young people in a range of

industries. Taking part in WorldSkills competitions enables the whole of Wales to benefit. Not only do competitors return to the country to inspire others to follow in their footsteps but they also bring their knowledge and experience to the workplace, helping develop skills and setting high industry standards.

“However, the journey neither starts nor ends with WorldSkills international – there is a cycle of programme development behind Welsh involvement in competitions which allows colleges and training providers to benchmark and quality assure themselves against the best in the world, encouraging continuous professional development and raising our teaching standards. We wish Joseph, Alfie, Elizabeth and Ethan good luck in Abu Dhabi and look forward to following their journey.”

[New figures show the number of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales fell during 2016](#)

Figures published today [27/04/17] from the Annual Population Survey (APS) show that in the twelve months ending 31 December 2016, 8.5% of 16-18 year olds were estimated to be NEET compared with 9.6% at the end of 2015. This represents 9,100 young people compared with 10,200.

During the same period ending 31 December 2016, 17.1% of 19-24 year olds (42,000 people) were estimated to be NEET, against 18.6% (46,600) at the year ending 31 December 2015.

The figures also include data recently published by Careers Wales which shows the number of Year 11 leavers from schools in Wales known to be NEET also decreased between 2015 and 2016 and now stands at 2.0% (619) compared to 2.8% (911) in 2015.

Welcoming the results the Minister said:

“Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training is a key priority for this government and we are committed to ensuring our policies and programmes continue to support young peoples’ educational and employment needs.

“For example, our Youth Engagement and Progression Framework supports local authorities and other organisations to put systems

in place to reduce the number of 16-18 year old NEET young people in Wales and today's report shows we are producing good results."

A number of Welsh Government schemes help young people into work, such as Jobs Growth Wales. Supported by the European Structural Fund, Jobs Growth Wales provides unemployed young people aged 16-24 with a job opportunity for six months.

Since launching in 2012, almost 15,000 job vacancies were filled through scheme 1 of the programme, with a further 2,365 filled under scheme 2 by March 2017.

The Minister added:

"While we are always looking at ways to improve our approaches to ensure they remain responsive to changing needs, these figures clearly show our focus on supporting young people into training or further education and into work are proving effective and we are delivering for Wales."

[Carl Sargeant welcomes Help to Buy success](#)

The majority of homes purchased through Help to Buy Wales were to first time buyers, accounting for 75 per cent of total completions.

Communities and Children's Secretary Carl Sargeant has welcomed the figures, saying the Welsh Government's ambitious housing programme is about providing people with affordable, safe, warm and secure homes in sustainable communities.

Carl Sargeant said:

"I am pleased that our Help to Buy Wales investment has given many first time buyers the help they need to get their foot on the property ladder.

"The scheme has also helped provide the Welsh housing market with essential momentum and created valuable jobs.

"Last year we announced we would invest up to £290m in a second phase of the scheme to support the construction of more than 6,000

homes which will be part of our target of an additional 20,000 homes during this term of government. This reflects the success of the scheme in providing a route into more affordable home ownership, especially for first-time buyers. It has played a huge role in generating confidence within the housing sector and supporting private housing development.”