

£9.4m to help people with health problems stay in work

The additional money will be directed to the In Work Support Service which aims to give people with mental or physical health conditions free and rapid access to occupational therapy in order to help them remain in employment. The injection of funding will enable the existing programme – which is delivered by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU) in South Wales and RCS in North Wales – to be extended until December 2022.

The In Work Support Service fills a gap in the market that was identified by partner organisations including General Practitioner Committee Wales and the Federation of Small Businesses, and provides rapid therapeutic interventions which help employees on or at risk of long-term sickness absence.

In supporting people with health problems to stay in work and in helping SME employers to manage the business impact of sickness absence, the programme aligns with the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All plan as well as its Economic Action Plan, Employability Plan and its Health strategy – A Healthier Wales.

The Economy Secretary announced the additional funding at a celebration event for Rhyl City Strategy (RCS), a not-for-profit organisation that aims to help people fulfil their potential through work. He said:

“The cost to the Welsh economy of work-related ill health is estimated at £500m per annum and we know that SME employers and their employees are disproportionately affected by sick absence at work. That is one of the reasons why our new Economic Contract encourages businesses to promote good health in the workplace.

“To further support this ambition I am pleased to announce an additional £9.4m for the In Work Support Programme. I hope this will help to prevent people with common health conditions from falling out of work, and will also encourage businesses to build healthier work places.”

The additional funding, which is made of £7.2m of EU funding and £2.2m of Welsh Government funding, will significantly expand the service to support up to 12,000 people and some 2,500 businesses to build a healthy workplace. The service will be widened to encompass more employees in rural areas and will look to increase engagement with small business networks and local health services.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“This project brings together health professionals, skills and

business support into a single service that helps people to remain in employment through direct workplace focused interventions.

It demonstrates the powerful potential of effective cross-government working to deliver positive action for vulnerable people in a joined-up and efficient way.”

RCS’s Operational Director, Alison Thomas, said:

“The In Work Support Service provides vital support to help keep employees in work in the face of individual health challenges, bringing enormous benefits both for employed and self-employed people and for the North Wales business community as a whole.

We are delighted at the news of the service extension to December 2022, which will allow us to continue our work in supporting employees and business owners to create healthy, positive and productive workplaces.”

Paul Dunning, Professional Head of Staff Health and Wellbeing at ABMU Health Board said:

“ABMU welcome the continued funding of the service which will enable the team to support the physical and mental health of the working population and support Welsh Government’s aspirations to look after the wellbeing of employees within the workplace.”

Cabinet Secretary for Finance makes keynote speech at public sector finance conference

The Welsh budget has been reduced by £850 million over the course of the last decade as a result of the UK government’s policy of austerity, the Finance Secretary will tell the audience at St David’s Hotel, in Cardiff Bay.

He will be joined by fellow speakers Debbie Wilcox, leader of the WLGA; Kellie Beirne, programme director of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and Adrian Crompton, Auditor General for Wales to discuss how public resources can achieve the greatest possible impact for communities.

Professor Drakeford said:

“I’m aware that there is growing pressure on public bodies to deliver more for less during these times of austerity and massive uncertainty about how the UK will be leaving the EU.

“Over the next 2 years, the Welsh Government’s budget will increase by £365 million to fulfil the UK government’s NHS commitment, covering the new pay and pension arrangements. That is the good news. Our consequential for all other devolved public services – for local government, including social care, for schools, colleges and universities, for transport and business support – is just £185 million over 2 years.

“One of the opportunities we have to help address fairness is through our new tax powers. The introduction of the first Welsh taxes of the modern era – land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax – have provided us with an opportunity to replace two existing UK taxes with alternatives more geared to the circumstances of Wales.

“With reducing budgets these devolved taxes are helping to fund public services within Wales.

“Whilst facing hard choices, the Welsh Government and local authorities will continue to work to protect our vital public services and invest in our economy, while seeking to achieve greater fairness in society.”

CIPFA is the world’s only professional accountancy body that specialises in public services. It has 14,000 members working throughout the public services, in national audit agencies, in major accountancy firms, and in other bodies where public money needs to be effectively and efficiently managed.

The annual CIPFA conference will take place today at St David’s Hotel, Cardiff Bay between 10am and 5pm. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance will make his key note speech at 10:30am.

[Transport Secretary Ken Skates officially opens multi-million pound M4 junction 28 roundabout construction project](#)

The £13.7million project, which started in February 2017, aims to reduce

delays on the M4 and encourage more motorists to use the Southern Distributor Road in Newport.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates planted a tree at the roundabout today (Wednesday, 21 November) to mark the official opening of the project.

The tree planting will contribute to the Welsh Government's Green Corridors initiative, which aims to improve the landscape and environmental quality of the urban and rural transport network in Wales.

The roundabout, together with the adjacent roundabouts of Bassaleg and Pont Ebbw, is used by more than 6,000 vehicles an hour at peak times.

Benefits from the work include reduced delays to movements between the M4, A48, A467 and the Southern Distributor Road, as well as enhanced road safety at junctions. It is hoped that improvements to all three junctions will boost economic regeneration by providing access to jobs, safe and reliable journeys and improved resilience for the trunk road and local network in south east Wales.

During the opening ceremony Ken Skates also had the opportunity to view a simulated driving unit which Arup, the project designer, are developing. The project involves the use of virtual reality and computer gaming technology to develop a simulator that allows people to look at designs.

In the prototype development Arup have used the design data from the Junction 28 project to prepare a demonstration driving simulator.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Ken Skates said:

"I am delighted to mark the completion of this £13.7million construction project that will not only boost traffic flow but also improve road safety in the area.

"This vital construction work will benefit thousands of motorists every day at a junction that is a principal link between the M4 and the major employment area of west Newport. The junction also provides a link between the eastern South Wales Valleys and west Newport, so this construction project should have a massive impact on transport links for motorists.

"It was fascinating to see the virtual reality simulator that helped contribute to the planning of this project and gain an insight into the cutting edge technology that can be used in future.

"It is important that we have a strong transport network across Wales that can support not only businesses but the wider population too. We need to invest in our infrastructure in projects like this and ensure that every effort is made to support the Welsh economy."

Tom Kenyon, Project Manager for Costain, the Principal Contractor for the M4 J28 improvements scheme, said:

“We are really pleased to have completed this much needed project and we are very grateful to the travelling public and nearby communities for their tolerance and support during the 20 month construction programme.

“There remains some ongoing work with A467 southbound morning peak time traffic flows, otherwise the new arrangements seem to be operating very effectively.”

“New streamlined process will improve quality and outcomes for cancer patients in Wales” – Vaughan Gething

The new single cancer pathway, will start from the point a patient is suspected of having cancer, rather than when the cancer is confirmed, as is currently the case for some cancer patients. It is intended that treatment should start no later than 62 days from the point of suspicion.

Implementation of the new single cancer pathway will be supported with a £3m investment from the Welsh Government from next financial year.

The new pathway will not replace the current Urgent Suspected Cancer / Non Urgent Suspected Cancer pathways at this point in time. However, health boards will be expected to dual report performance against all three pathways from June 2019.

Last November [2017] the Health Secretary announced local health boards would shadow report the new single pathway for cancer alongside the other pathways.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Cancer has become the single biggest cause of premature death in Wales and the UK.

“It’s highly likely cancer will touch everyone’s life at some point; some will develop the disease themselves, some will watch a friend or loved one battling it – sometimes more than once.

“The NHS in Wales is consistently treating more cancer patients than ever before. We are seeing and treating more patients than

ever before. In the last 12 months. 17,033 patients started definitive treatment for cancer, that's 8.6% (1,347) more than five years ago. And 15,730 patients started treatment within the target times, that's 8.1% (1,180) more than five years ago.

"However, we can't get away from the fact we have not met the targets often enough but we must also recognise that around 92% of people with cancer are being treated within target time across both pathways.

"We want to ensure that anyone who experiences cancer in Wales has access to timely and appropriate treatment that will deliver the best possible outcome.

"Proposals for the single cancer pathway have been clinically led and have wide support across the clinical community. Through dual reporting of the single cancer pathway, Wales will be the first UK nation to move towards a single waiting time measure for cancer. It is reflective of our aspiration to support early diagnosis of cancer and ensure fast and effective treatment for all patients.

"The new way of measuring people's waits for cancer treatment will improve quality and outcomes for our cancer patients and I am confident that it is the right approach for Wales."

Andy Glyde, Cancer Research UK's public affairs manager in Wales, said:

"Cancer waiting times are a barometer for how the NHS is performing and this new system is welcome as it will give us a clearer picture of what is happening for patients going through a cancer diagnosis.

"The Welsh Government's commitment to detecting cancer earlier is important. Patients diagnosed at the earliest stages of cancer are more likely to have successful treatment. For the new Single Cancer Pathway to achieve its full potential it has to be used to inform how we improve cancer diagnosis in Wales, including making sure we have the right workforce in place."

[Eight new Welsh projects to help 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'](#)

Some of the projects will improve facilities to repair or refurbish unwanted items. A new 'Green Shed' in Colwyn Bay will involve the local community in preparing items to be reused. A second 'reuse centre' in Rhondda Cynon Taf

will open in Treherbert, alongside the existing centre in Llantrisant, which the Minister visited today. A new reuse facility will also open in the Maindee area of Newport.

In Pembrokeshire, a Zero Waste School pilot project will provide new recycling facilities at 24 schools in the county, to recycle more waste from schools while encouraging the pupils to reduce waste or dispose of it responsibly.

Funding will also be provided to Denbighshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent, including new reuse facilities and improvements to waste collection services.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“One of the best ways to reduce waste is to repair and refurbish items so they can be reused and some of these projects will improve facilities to enable this. We’re also investing in a pilot schools project to reduce waste and instill good habits from a young age.

“Where materials can’t be re-used, the next best method is to recycle, so we’re also investing in the machinery to better manage recyclable items.

“Wales is first in the UK, second in Europe and third in the world for household recycling, so our track record speaks for itself. The proportion of waste we recycle in Wales has increased dramatically, from 5% in 1999 to 63% last year.

“This range of new projects will not only help reduce waste in the coming years, it should lead to a cultural change in the longer term, helping us achieve our ambition to become a ‘Zero Waste Nation’ by 2050.”

The eight capital funding projects are:

- £500,000 to Pembrokeshire County Council to support a Zero Waste Schools initiative
- £1,020,000 to Conwy/Denbighshire County Councils to support initiatives by CREST
- £1,175,000 to Newport City Council to support initiatives by Wastesavers
- £900,000 to Denbighshire County Council
- £541,000 to Blaenau Gwent CBC
- £120,000 to Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
- £646,375 to Monmouthshire County Council
- £490,000 to Merthyr Tydfil CBC