

Organ donation consent rates in Wales highest in the UK

The donation after circulatory death (DCD) consent rate in Wales has also improved and is now 68% compared to England 59.8%.

Wales now has the highest combined DBD and DCD consent rate in the UK at 80.5%, when compared to England (66.2%), Scotland (63.6%) and Northern Ireland (66.7).

On 1 December 2015, Wales became the first country in the UK to move to a soft opt-out system of consent to organ donation. This means that if a person has not registered a decision to become an organ donor (opted in) or a decision not to become an organ donor (opted out), they will be considered as having no objection to being an organ donor – this is known as deemed consent.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) have been undertaking an analysis of the effect of Welsh Legislation on consent/authorisation rates since 1 January 2016. They have collected cumulative data on consent rates in Wales compared to England.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Every organ donation is an invaluable, potentially life-giving gift. These new figures are a real cause for optimism and another indicator our pioneering legislation is having the effect we hoped it would and is helping deliver real improvements for Wales.

“None of what we have achieved would have been possible without the support of the Welsh population and the healthcare professionals involved in making this a success. I thank them all for getting behind this and am keen to see if these increases are sustained.”

Chief Medical Officer Dr Frank Atherton said:

“These are encouraging figures but we must continue the good work to further increase organ donation here in Wales.

“We must always be mindful that the numbers in Wales are small and we have to wait to see if these increases are sustained. We cannot definitely say this is solely down to our organ donation legislation but I think it is reasonable to believe that it must have contributed to it, together with better public awareness and good clinical practice.

“We know awareness and understanding is increasing, but it is

really important we continue to reach the Welsh public on this issue. It's really important that we keep the momentum going and I urge everyone to take a moment and have a conversation with their loved ones about their organ donation decision.

"If you know you want to be an organ donor, then simply tell your loved ones. Your family will be involved in any discussions about organ donation if you are in a position to donate your organs when you die. Never having discussed organ donation could make an already difficult time more stressful for families."

New buzz around Welsh Government offices

Nine new hives have been installed on the roof of the Cathays Park offices. The hives are part of Pharmabees, Cardiff University's award-winning project which aims to host a community of bees on buildings in the city centre. There are other hives on the roofs of the National Museum of Wales, the St David's Shopping Centre, Cardiff University buildings and in Bute Park.

Each hive will be home to up to 50,000 bees during the summer and will be managed by local bee keepers. The Welsh Government also has apiaries at its offices in Merthyr Tydfil, Llandudno Junction and Aberystwyth, along with other biodiversity projects on its estate.

The initiative is part of a number of Welsh Government biodiversity projects as part of its Action Plan for Pollinators. Pollination is also vital for crop production and worth more than £690 million to agriculture in the UK each year. Many wild flowering plants also rely on insect pollination for reproduction.

The Environment Minister, Hannah Blythyn, said:

"Bees are a crucial component of the food chain, acting as pollinators for a huge variety of plants and helping them flourish. But we've seen a decline in bee populations in recent years and we must take steps to reverse these trends.

"Our Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales sets out how we will provide diverse and connected flower-rich habitats for pollinators and raise awareness of their importance.

"Installing bee hives on public buildings is one way to highlight the importance of pollinators, with the added bonus of producing

amazing honey at the same time!”

Children in care in Wales are happy and settled – new survey shows

The “Our Lives, Our Care” pilot survey on the experiences of looked after children was conducted by the charity Coram Voice and the University of Bristol in six Welsh local authority areas earlier this year.

Commissioned by the Welsh Government and supported by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, it was completed by 686 children and young people – approximately 28% of all looked after children in Wales aged between 4 and 18 years old.

The survey was conducted as part of the Bright Spots Programme to help local authorities, as corporate parents, to better understand what matters most to the children they are looking after and their thoughts and feelings about the care they receive.

The survey found:

- 96% of children (4-10yrs) trusted their carer and only 4% did not, while 71% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carer ‘all or some of the time’ and only 7% did not trust at all
- The vast majority of children and young people did feel safe in their placements. In fact, a larger proportion of looked after children ‘always’ felt safe in comparison with children in the general population
- 94% of children and young people (8-18yrs) thought that their carers showed an interest in their education

Later today, the Minister will attend a national event in Llandrindod Wells to celebrate the work being done across Wales to improve the outcomes for looked after children.

Welcoming the results of the survey, Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Improving outcomes and life chances for care experienced children is a priority for me as Children’s Minister and of the Welsh Government as a whole.

“Recognising and listening to children and young people, and being responsive to their views and experiences is fundamental. So I want to thank all the children and young people who have given their time to participate in this survey.

“There are areas where we are doing well but also others where we can do better. We must now learn from what children and young people are saying matters to them most – in their relationships with their carers, families and friends, how they are supported and the opportunities they are given to flourish.

“I want local authorities to use the information wisely so it can influence how services are developed and delivered to meet children and young people’s needs and expectations.”

“My message to the children in care in Wales is – we will listen to you, and we will act to ensure your concerns are addressed.”

The Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland said:

“Speaking to children and young people face to face is very important, but a survey does something different. It gives them the chance to give anonymous, honest feedback on their experiences, and provides the opportunity for those in charge of their care to pinpoint areas they may need to work on to improve experiences.

“The questions in this survey focused on children’s rights and well-being, and it is the first time such a survey has been conducted in Wales. I championed this survey being undertaken here in Wales to make sure that ‘bright spots’ of practice can be highlighted and celebrated, and that the concerns of care experienced children here in Wales can be heard and, more importantly, addressed.

“I look forward to seeing the concrete changes and actions that come from this important piece of work, reflecting what each local authority as the corporate parent will take forward for their own children in their care.”

Brigid Robinson, Managing Director of Coram Voice, said:

“We are pleased to work in partnership with the Welsh Government so that the views and experiences of more children in care can be heard, and its commitment to act on these findings is very encouraging.

“We hope that further local authorities will get involved in the programme so that we can build a wider picture of how children and young people feel about their care, address any variation in support, and most importantly act upon what they tell us.”

The co-author of the report, Professor Julie Selwyn CBE, Director of the University of Bristol’s Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies,

said:

“I am delighted that the Welsh government has today published the views of over 600 looked after children and young people in Wales on how they feel their lives are going.

“Most children felt that their lives were improving, felt safe in their placements and trusted their carers but about one in six young people (11-18yrs) had concerning low levels of wellbeing. Girls were twice as likely as boys to have low wellbeing as were those who had experienced many changes of placement. Children who had an adult in their life who they trusted, had at least one good friend, understood why they were in care, and liked their appearance were more likely to have good wellbeing.

“We are pleased that the local authorities who took part in the study have already begun to make changes in response to the findings.”

[Welsh Government Minister joins #DontDanceAlone campaign to help tackle loneliness in Swansea](#)

The local radio station The Wave and Swansea Sound's #DontDanceAlone campaign was launched in 2017 to raise awareness of the older generation, shining a light on the devastating effects loneliness has and to encourage and promote intergenerational relationships through dance.

Its 2018 campaign was launched on October 7, leading to the first official #DontDanceAlone Week from November 12 to November 18.

During the week, community groups, schools and businesses are being encouraged to host or create their own events, where older members of the community can attend and participate with younger members of the community.

The Minister visited Birchgrove Primary School in the Swansea Valley for a day of World War Two-themed activities, including a tea dance party with the pupils and grandparents/local older residents of the community.

He then visited St Nicholas on the Hill and St Jude's Church in Swansea, where he joined a community-led event where older and younger members of the community came together to dance.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on its plans to tackle

loneliness and social isolation across Wales. Around 17% of people in Wales – 440,000 people – reported being lonely in 2016-17.

The consultation will last for 12 weeks (until 15 January 2019) and the consultation document is available on the Welsh Government's website.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“There is a growing awareness of the problem of loneliness and unwanted social isolation across Wales and the UK as a whole. We know from research that loneliness can have a serious impact on our health – which could be the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. That's why as a Welsh Government, we've said tackling loneliness and unwanted social isolation is a national priority for us.

“So it's crucial we do what we can to bring communities together. I'm delighted to have been in Swansea today to lend my support to the fantastic #DontDanceAlone campaign being run by The Wave and Swansea Sound. It's proving to be a real hit, bringing young and old together to enjoy tea and dance. This is exactly the kind of thing I want to see more of across Wales.

“In Wales, we have a proud tradition of close-knit communities coming together to provide that strong sense of togetherness. Let's all do what we can to rekindle that spirit in our communities – in every village, town and city across the country. Together, we must tackle loneliness and isolation.”

Preferred partner for new GP indemnity scheme in Wales announced

Speaking at the Primary Health Care Conference in Cardiff, Mr Gething said the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Legal and Risk Services, who currently indemnify GPs working Out of Hours, is the preferred partner to operate the Future Liability Scheme from April next year.

The scheme, which will be aligned as far as possible to the scheme announced in England, will ensure GPs in Wales are not at a disadvantage relative to those in England and that GP recruitment and cross border activity will not be adversely affected by different schemes operating in England and Wales.

Mr Gething said:

“This new scheme will provide greater stability and certainty for GPs in Wales. It will support GP practices and primary care clusters in their delivery of sustainable and accessible health care.

The Future Liabilities Scheme will cover the activity of all contractors who provide primary medical services. This will include clinical negligence liabilities arising from the activities of GP practice staff and other medical professionals such as salaried GPs; locum GPs; practice pharmacists; practice nurses; healthcare assistants.

I will make a final decision on the delivery of the Future Liability Scheme in Wales following further engagement with medical defence organisations.”

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of GPC Wales, commented:

“GPC Wales supports Welsh Government’s decision to announce Welsh Legal and Risk Pool as the preferred partner to provide the future liabilities indemnity scheme for General Practice. The proposed scheme will address one of the biggest financial pressures on GPs and will help enable all GPs, practice teams and wider cluster healthcare professionals to work more closely together taking forward the transformation of Welsh primary care.”