

£4m investment to transform eye care in Wales

Speaking at the All Wales National Eye Care Conference in Cardiff today (17 September) Mr Gething said the money will transform services to ensure patients are diagnosed and treated more quickly.

Decisions about exactly how the £4m will be allocated will be taken by the Welsh Government following advice from an independent panel and could potentially include the expansion of existing community based treatment centres, additional training for medical staff to treat a greater range of patients and other activities to support sustainable services.

The service changes will support the introduction of a new performance measure to be introduced later this month, based on patient's clinical need. Wales will be the first UK nation to introduce a measure of this kind for eye care patients alongside the existing referral to treatment target.

The changes are being introduced following consultation with ophthalmologists and RNIB about the best way to ensure eye patients are seen and treated in good time.

Mr Gething said: "Regular sight tests and early diagnosis are extremely important in order to prevent and treat eye disease.

Currently nearly 107,000 people in Wales are living with sight loss and this is predicted to double by 2050. Improving access and speeding up diagnosis are vital to ensure eye care services are fit for the future.

The investment will be used to improve services to support the new performance measure for eye care services. From this month, all eye care patients in Wales will be given a maximum waiting time following referral and any ongoing reviews based on their condition and risk of harm.

We were the first government in the world to have an eye care delivery plan and are now the first in the UK to introduce a performance measure of this kind for eye care.

These changes are in line with our long term vision for the NHS in Wales to transform the way services are delivered, providing quality care closer to people's homes."

First Minister officially opens state-of-the-art school in Bridgend

Betws Primary School is the fifth of its kind to be built in Bridgend County Borough over the past 5 years thanks to a Welsh Government funding scheme. The 21st Century Schools and Education Programme supports schools to upgrade their buildings, outdoor areas and IT equipment to match modern-day needs.

The previous Betws Primary was demolished after it was badly damaged following a fire but it has now made way for 2 contemporary buildings; the new Betws Primary and a Welsh-medium primary, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon Y Cymoedd, relocating from nearby Pontycymer.

The new building is part of a £10.8 million investment for the Garw Valley south area, supported by around £5.4 million from Welsh Government.

In November, Welsh Government announced a second round of investment in the 21st Century Schools Programme which will see a further £2.3 billion invested in modernising education infrastructure across Wales.

Although the school started welcoming students through its doors in January, the First Minister's visit will celebrate the beginning of the school's first full academic year. Pupils had previously been taught in portable classrooms following the 2012 fire which destroyed the junior block.

Ahead of the opening, First Minister Carwyn Jones, said,

"It's a real privilege to open this fantastic new school in Betws. Visiting new schools is a great opportunity to see first-hand how Welsh Government, local authorities and schools work in partnership to deliver better education for our communities.

"We are committed to raising standards and delivering the best education to every child in our country.

"Our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme is the largest investment Welsh Government has made towards our schools and colleges since the 1960s. This will ensure Wales has schools that are not just the pride of Wales but the envy of other nations."

Head teacher of Betws Primary School, Liz Pearce, said,

"The pupils of Betws Primary are very proud of their fantastic new school. The investment of Welsh Government along with Bridgend County Borough Council in developing outstanding 21st Century Schools has given our pupils opportunities to first class learning.

“From the attractively designed acoustics and brightly coloured paintwork to the soft play and Astroturf sports area, our pupils can learn and play in a superior learning environment.

“We are delighted to receive a visit from the First Minister as we know he is also passionate about the young people of Wales and are grateful for him taking time out of his busy schedule to open our school.”

The First Minister unveiled a plaque as part of the opening ceremony, supported by the Mayor of Bridgend, the Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, and its Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration.

[Appointment of independent members to the Regulatory Board for Wales](#)

The Board consider reports from the Regulator and other relevant publications and information sources to advise the Minister on the performance of the regulator, the sector and any related policy implications.

The Minister has appointed two new independent members to the Regulatory Board

These appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. All such appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any declared) to be published.

Political Activity

Jane Mudd – Jane is Labour Party member and a Labour councillor for Malpas in Newport.

Kevin Lawrence – No political Activity declared

The appointments will commence on 1 September 2018 and expire automatically on 30 August 2021. The post of Independent Member is a paid post earning £198 per day.

Biographies

Jane Mudd

Jane is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and a former Chair of

CIH Cymru.

Jane is the Principal Lecturer in Housing and Head of Department of Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Prior to this, Jane was Principal Lecturer in Housing and Head of Department of Applied Community Sciences, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Jane has a wealth of experience with more than 20 years of working in housing, teaching and researching.

Jane is a former board member of Newport City Homes and she is the Newport City Council Member for Regeneration and Housing.

Kevin Lawrence

Following a career as a lecturer in Computing and Information Technology, Kevin changed direction to dedicate his skills to the role of ILT (Information Learning Technology) Manager, developing learning platforms and delivering staff development to college staff. He has a keen interest in IT and the role it can play in both general management of day-to-day activities within a housing association and how it can help implement the regulatory framework. Since becoming a LINC tenant 2 years ago, he has become a keen member of their Tenant Panel and was recently elected as Chair.

[First Minister officially opens £18m North Wales Neonatal Unit](#)

The Sub Regional Neonatal Intensive Care Centre (SuRNICC) is a 20-cot unit caring for the most poorly and premature babies born in North Wales and is part of the North Wales Neonatal Network, which links special care units in Wrexham and Bangor.

It includes a transitional care service to help parents of newborn babies spend more time with their infant, a neonatal transport service to ensure babies born across North Wales can access facilities at the unit, and on-site parent accommodation. It also meets the highest neonatal standards, and offers significantly improved facilities for both the families of the babies and staff.

The First Minister approved plans for the SuRNICC to be sited at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in 2014 following a recommendation from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to centralise neonatal services in North Wales.

The First Minister said:

“The SuRNICC is a wonderful new centre for neonatal intensive care in North Wales. I approved the siting of the unit at Glan Clwyd

back in 2014, and it has been a real privilege to be here today to talk to staff and families about their experiences at the new facility.

“The teams across North Wales have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that the population have new neonatal services that care for sick and premature babies within the region, reducing the number of babies and families having to travel to England for their care.

“The people of North Wales have access to the very best neonatal care and everyone involved should be very proud of their achievements.”

Mandy Cooke, Neonatal Service Manager, said:

“We’re extremely proud of our new unit, and were delighted to show the First Minister around.

“The new facilities will help our neonatal team ensure poorly and premature babies, and their families, continue to receive outstanding care in North Wales for many years to come.”

[SHWSH helps spread the word on the Welsh language](#)

SHWSH promised ‘hot bands, secret locations and free, exclusive experiences’ around Cardiff in the run up to and during the Eisteddfod. Participants signed up by text to receive instructions and information on the gigs and exclusive discount codes from retailers across the city.

Over 450 people attended the seven intimate performances by the likes of Huw Stephens, Gwenno, Chroma, Mellt, Papur Wal, Han2k, H.Hawkline and Gwilym.

56% of attendees surveyed said they had already planned to attend the Cardiff Eisteddfod. However, 29% more stated that Shwsh inspired them to attend the festival. 91% of those surveyed also said they would attend more SHWSH gigs in future and 92% said they would listen to more Welsh language music or that they are already fans.

Joshua Roberts from Cardiff said:

“I’d never been to a Welsh language music event before but I liked how the events were organised and the secrecy element behind the

undisclosed locations. The gigs themselves were really enjoyable and it was great to discover new musical acts that I might not otherwise have heard. Not being able to speak Welsh didn't feel like an issue because I was just enjoying the music and great atmosphere."

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan said:

"As with its big sister, Dydd Miwsig Cymru, one of the aims of SHWSH was to encourage those who may not speak Welsh to enjoy Welsh language music and to use that as stepping stone to the Eisteddfod, which, for the first time this year was free to visitors. Over 80% of those surveyed visited the Eisteddfod with 29% saying Shwsh inspired them to visit.

"Reaching the target of a million Welsh speakers is a task that requires culture change and government cannot do that alone. Education has a very important role to play in boosting the number among future generations but we also have to encourage adults to engage with and to learn the language.

"The Eisteddfod provides an excellent opportunity to inspire people to embrace the language and all the cultural benefits that brings so I am delighted SHWSH had a positive effect in encouraging people who would not otherwise have attended the Eisteddfod to visit and to see what it has to offer."