

Encouraging start for new HIV prevention drug in Wales

Health boards in Wales started providing Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in July last year through sexual health clinics as part of a three year study. The antiretroviral medication can be provided to at risk, uninfected people to prevent them getting HIV.

The Welsh Government asked Public Health Wales and an independent HIV expert group to run the study to provide evidence for the acceptability and effectiveness of PrEP in HIV prevention.

In the first year of the study (July 2017 to end of June 2018) 559 people have started the treatment and no-one on PrEP has contracted HIV.

The national approach to PrEP and HIV prevention in Wales contrasts with England, where a national approach is not being taken and a charity is looking to raise funds for PrEP treatment.

PrEP is only part of the strategy to reduce new infections of HIV. The reduction in new infections continues to fall, with the latest data (May 2018) showing that new cases of HIV fell by 24% in the last quarter of 2017 compared to the last quarter of 2016.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said: "I am pleased that sexual health services in Wales have embraced the opportunity that PrEP provides and the early results from the study are encouraging. No new cases of HIV have been reported in those who have started taking the medication.

"Wales has seen a sustained decrease in new HIV cases. There is no doubt that PrEP reduces rates of HIV infection when taken correctly and supported by wider, preventative sexual health services. It can help to reduce overall HIV transmission and infection rates. I look forward to seeing further results as they emerge.

"Making PrEP available in Wales is only one aspect of our wider approach to HIV and STI prevention in Wales. To help implement the recommendations in Public Health Wales' recent sexual health review, I have approved funding for a number of interventions to improve sexual health in Wales including a pilot for online STI testing and a project to provide self-sampling HIV tests to those attending for PrEP clinics. This work will provide valuable insight into the acceptability and logistics of on-line and self- testing and will help inform future developments in sexual health service provision. "

Re-appointment of Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse

She has been re-appointed as Chair of the Panel from 14 August 2018 to 13 August 2019.

The Panel's remit is to advise on measures to prevent or reduce substance misuse including the associated health and social harms and review implementation of the Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Strategy.

Vaughan Gething said:

"I am very pleased that Caroline Phipps has agreed to continue her role of Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse. Her experience, knowledge and expertise will help us deliver our commitment to tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales."

Caroline Phipps is Chief Executive of Barod and has fulfilled this role since 2007. Prior to this, Caroline worked in a number of roles throughout the sector including a secondment to Merthyr Tydfil Substance Misuse Action Team.

First Minister opens Welsh Government office in top export destination

The Welsh Government's new offices in Berlin and Dusseldorf will ensure Wales is able to develop strong trade links post-Brexit. It forms part of an expansion of the Welsh Government's overseas operations to protect existing markets, pursue new investment opportunities and promote Wales to the world.

Germany is Wales' top export destination, with the value of Welsh exports to Germany standing at £3.2 billion in 2017, a significant increase of 7.8% on the previous year.

Wales has achieved record levels of inward investment for the past 3 years, while Welsh exports also continue to soar. In 2017, Welsh exports stood at £16 billion, which is an increase of £2.39 billion on the previous year. Almost 60% of Welsh trade is sent to countries within the European Union.

There are 90 German-owned companies based in Wales, employing around 13,500 people. These include Arvato Bertelsmann in Swansea, Continental Teves in Ebbw Vale, Ensinger in Tonyrefail, RWE in Dolgarrog, Aberthaw, Pembroke, Port Talbot and Llandudno, and Siemens in Caernarfon, Caldicot and Bridgend.

The Welsh Government helps Welsh companies develop their export businesses in Germany. As a direct result of Welsh Government support, last year alone 21 Welsh companies secured German trade deals amounting to £5.23 million.

The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, said:

“Germany is of central importance to the Welsh economy; not only is it our top export destination for Welsh goods, it is an important inward investor, with Wales attracting almost 6% of all Germany’s investments into the UK.

“Opening these 2 new offices in Germany sends a loud and clear signal to our European partners – Wales is open for business and we are determined to see our positive relationship with the EU continue post-Brexit.

“Increasing Wales’ presence in Germany will allow us to pursue new trade and investment opportunities, build networks and boost Wales’ profile. This has never been more important as we face a future outside of the European Union.

“We also want to welcome more German students to our fantastic universities. Our 2 new offices in Germany will enable us to better support interested students and help us to develop this reciprocal relationship – it’s a win-win.”

There are approximately 680 German students studying at Welsh universities and colleges. 2 of Wales’ award-winning universities, Swansea and Aberystwyth, already have over 15 partnerships with universities across Germany.

Plans are progressing for the Welsh Government to open 2 further offices across the globe this year; in Doha and Paris.

[Welsh Government invests £1m to improve border efficiency at Cardiff](#)

Airport

A Welsh Government safety and security grant of £1million will enable the purchase and installation of latest-technology e-gates, which allow travellers with biometric passports to move quickly through border checks and avoid long waits for manual document inspections. They will be installed and fully operational by March 2019.

Although Cardiff Airport was one of the first airports in the UK to introduce e-gates, these have since been removed by the UK Border Force as the technology in the original e-gates have been superseded.

And as UK Government policy only allows e-gates to be supplied free of charge by UK Border Force to airports with over 2 million inbound passengers, such as Bristol and Heathrow, UK Border Force required a substantial capital payment to install replacement e-gates at Cardiff Airport.

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Since our acquisition of Cardiff Airport in 2013, it has seen year on year growth in passenger numbers with double digit growth projected for this year, not to mention a wealth of new routes and more capacity added on existing services.

However despite these successes, and having welcomed a million passengers already this year, the Airport has not yet reached the UK Government’s 2 million inbound passenger milestone that would enable it to qualify for free e-gates.

We have written to the UK Government on the issue of e-gates a number of times, pointing out the inequity of effectively subsidising larger airports whilst discriminating against smaller ones. However the UK Border Force has ignored these arguments.

There is no doubt that e-gates provide a more efficient method for processing passengers, reducing queues and ensuring an enhanced customer experience and I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to step in to ensure that Cardiff Airport benefits from the same essential technology that larger and more profitable airports have been given for free. It is another indication of our commitment to support Cardiff Airport’s continuing success and growth.”

Finance Secretary makes case for a more inclusive economy at Cardiff University event

Opening a two-day conference about social innovation in the foundation economy at Cardiff University, he will highlight the need for improvement to drive up wages and job prospects.

But Professor Drakeford will also speak about how many communities in Wales feel marginalised and insecure – feelings which are being heightened by the prospect of a ‘hard’ Brexit.

The foundation economy is the part of the economy which provides essential goods and services to communities and has been highlighted as playing a crucial role in creating a prosperous Wales in the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan.

The Welsh Government has identified four foundation sectors where working more effectively across Government will maximise benefits tourism, food, retail and care.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Upwards of 40% of our workforce are employed in the foundation economy. That is a huge number of jobs – jobs which yes, are too often low paid and career prospects poor, but that is an argument for taking the foundation economy seriously and driving improvement.

“There is no escaping the fact that communities feel insecure. That despite the undoubted economic progress we have made since devolution – parts of Wales still feel marginalised, overlooked even. Of course, those insecurities are only heightened by the prospect of a hard Brexit and the cliff edge of a no deal scenario.

The two-day conference has been organised by the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) and will feature a series of presentations and panel discussions led by a range of academics, policy-makers and elected representatives.

The event will also highlight examples of international best practice and the second day will feature a panel discussion with a number of AMs taking part.

The Finance Secretary added:

“Now more than ever, it is important that we not only strengthen the foundations of our economy, but also that we build places – places in which people have pride and in which they feel secure. The foundation economy is almost uniquely placed to help us to do just that.”