

Ministers confirm £60m Welsh Government investment in 115 new and refurbished childcare settings across Wales

The facilities are being developed as part of a £60m capital investment programme in the childcare sector.

Ministers are committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The 30 hours is made up of the existing minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase and up to 20 hours of childcare with a registered provider.

The Childcare Offer is currently being rolled-out across Wales, and will be available across the country by next year. More than 5,000 eligible children are already benefitting from the offer.

The projects awarded funding will focus primarily on supporting the co-location of existing Foundation Phase education provision with the new Childcare Offer provision on a single site, wherever possible. This will make it as easy as possible for parents to access wrap-around care.

The funding will either help establish new childcare settings or refurbish existing ones to ensure they meet the required standard that would be expecting of a setting delivering the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer.

Local authorities have also secured funding to enable them to operate a Small Grants Scheme in their area, which will enable private and voluntary sector childcare providers to access up to £10,000 of capital funding to carry out work on their premises.

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan said:

"I'm very pleased to announce the Welsh Government is giving the go-ahead to the development of 115 new or redeveloped childcare facilities across Wales, as part of a £60m capital investment programme to deliver our highly ambitious Childcare Offer.

"The investment we're making will ensure the Childcare Offer is available to parents across Wales by ensuring there is sufficient childcare in the right areas, with a specific focus on developing new provision in areas that currently lack childcare services, in particular rural and disadvantaged areas."

"The investment will also support the growth and sustainability of the childcare sector across Wales, helping to create high-quality

jobs in the sector.”

Of the projects approved, £33m – nearly 47% of the grants being awarded – are being allocated to Welsh medium childcare settings. This is designed to help deliver the Welsh Government’s ‘Cymraeg 2050’ strategy, which involves delivering its aim of 1m Welsh speakers by 2050.

Minister for the Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan added:

“Expanding Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point for Welsh-medium education is a vital part of the vision set out in Cymraeg 2050. I’m delighted that the Welsh Government are making a significant investment in the sector.

“This will allow existing Welsh-medium settings to expand the range services they can offer as well as provide facilities for new settings, enabling greater numbers of children to start their Welsh language journey.”

Projects include:

North Wales

- More than £2.5m for Anglesey to develop 7 projects, including a childcare setting in Ysgol Santes Dwynwen;
- £2.7m for Denbighshire for 4 projects, including the relocation of two Cylch Meithrin from unsuitable premises in Rhyl.

Mid and West Wales

- More than £1.8m for Ceredigion to develop 3 projects, including nearly £800,000 to ensure a childcare setting is installed in a new Welsh medium school in Aberaeron.

South West Wales

- Nearly £3.3m for Neath Port Talbot to develop 7 projects across the County, including a new childcare setting at a Welsh medium primary school in Neath.

South East Wales

- Nearly £5m for Caerphilly to develop 10 projects, including four Welsh medium childcare settings;
 - More than £1.7m for the Vale of Glamorgan to develop 3 projects, including a new childcare setting at Gladstone Primary School.
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Consultation aims to change Relationship and Sexuality Education in preparation for new curriculum

Developed in line with the recommendations from the expert panel [report](#) published in December last year, the new draft guidance will support schools in implementing a 'whole school approach' to RSE; taking into account curriculum, wider school policies, external sources of support and case studies demonstrating best practice.

A name change from Sex and Relationship Education to Relationship and Sexuality Education has also been actioned through the draft guidance, in order to better support schools in engaging with a range of important topics; such as healthy relationships, domestic violence and LGBT issues.

The announcement was made during a visit to Glyncollen Primary School in Swansea, a pioneer school on the group developing the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience of the new curriculum.

During the visit, the Minister joined in with the intergenerational group the school has adopted, called 'Fun with Friends'. This innovative group brings together the school's pupils and older people from the local community, where they are given tasks to work on together, encouraging both parties to interact and learn from each other.

Education Minister Kirsty Williams said:

"Last year, I announced that we would not wait until the new curriculum to make changes to how RSE is taught in our schools, which is why I've decided to revise the current guidance for schools around RSE now.

"Our new guidance will help schools prepare for the changes to how RSE will be taught in our new curriculum by providing them with additional advice and support regarding implementing a whole school approach to RSE.

"High quality Relationships and Sexuality Education is at the heart of our *Prosperity for All* and *Education in Wales: Our National Mission* strategies.

"The skills learners develop through RSE gives them the tools needed to navigate the wide ranging and fast changing influences that can impact on their ability to form healthy relationships.

"It is the lifelong relationships we forge in our early years, such as family and friends, which can provide the stability, security and support needed to maintain well-being.

“I strongly encourage everyone to contribute to the consultation, to make sure that we get RSE right for our pupils.”

Expert Panel chair and Professor of Childhood Studies at Cardiff University, Emma Renold said:

“I am delighted to hear that the Welsh Government has launched this consultation, and that the revised draft guidance for schools has been informed by and is embracing the expert panel’s evidenced-based vision to transform Relationships and Sexuality Education in Wales.

“Embedded in a whole school approach and underpinned by the core principles of rights, equity, inclusivity, protection and empowerment, this guidance, if accompanied by effective professional development, and the time to deliver, has the potential ensure a relevant, engaging and high quality RSE that meets the needs of all children and young people”

Glyncollen Head Teacher, Anna Bolt said:

“As a pioneer school within the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience developing group, we have been given a unique opportunity to trial innovative methods to change how RSE is taught in Welsh schools.

“Through our intergenerational group, ‘Fun with Friends’, we’ve been able to draw on the local community in order to teach our pupils how to form meaningful relationships, encouraging cohesion and fighting against isolation within the community.”

Cardiff to Anglesey flights secured for another four years

The new Public Services Obligation (PSO) air service contract has been given to Eastern Airways, who since March 2017, has established stability and restored passenger confidence achieving significant growth on the route of around 40%, bringing visibility to the service amongst new and existing passengers.

Transport Minister, Ken Skates said:

“Wales needs to be better connected. Eastern Airways shares our ambitions to significantly grow the route over the next four years, thereby increasing the economic benefit to Wales. I hope this will include Eastern Airways operating its Jetstream 41 at the full capacity of 29 seats, offering almost 50% more seats than it is currently able to offer.

This increase would be subject to the UK Government supporting the reclassification of Anglesey Airport. This would enable the full capacity utilisation of the larger aircraft helping bring exciting growth opportunities to the region.

The need for an increase in capacity on the route has been clearly demonstrated over the last two years. With increased efficiencies and higher yield due to additional passenger revenue, this increase in capacity would see a reduction in the subsidy over the four years of the contract when compared to continuing with a 19 seat operation.

The new contract will continue to make a positive contribution towards the Welsh economy and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by lessening the gap between local communities and the capital city, improving regional connectivity, increasing socio-economic opportunities and contributing to the delivery of ‘A Wales of cohesive communities’.

The PSO route provides an important functional and symbolic link connecting north and south Wales. It facilitates access to internal markets for Welsh businesses. This quick and effective internal mode of transport will be vital post Brexit.

In addition to already supporting the Cardiff – Anglesey service, I continue to push the UK Government to allow Wales to introduce a network of new PSO air services across the UK to support Wales’ domestic trade.”

Eastern Airways General Manager (Commercial and Operations), Roger Hage said:

“Since stepping in to cover this incredibly important economic link between the north and south of Wales, we have proactively grown passenger numbers as part of the Flybe branded service.

We are delighted in being awarded the contract to help further grow the capacity on the service in fully supporting the Transport Minister, and both Cardiff Airport and Anglesey Council’s ambition to increase accessibility and also improve connectivity to other services of offered by our partner Flybe, plus Qatar, KLM, Ryanair and TUI at Cardiff.”

Deputy Minister urges Welsh public to have their say on plastic waste

The Welsh Government has been working with the other UK nations on a comprehensive UK wide approach to address the problems created by commonly littered single use plastics.

As a result, the UK nations have today launched three joint consultations and the Deputy Minister is encouraging those in Wales with an interest to have their say.

Two joint consultations are being launched by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) The first, which applies to the UK as a whole, relates to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging.

Currently, in the UK, it is estimated that producers only pay approximately 10% of the overall cost of recycling their packaging waste. EPR schemes aim to ensure that producers bear the waste management cost of the products they place onto the market, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.

The second consultation, which applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, relates to a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers. The Scottish Government consulted on proposals for a DRS last year.

A third UK-wide consultation is also being published by HM Treasury today. It proposes a tax on the production and import of plastic packaging that does not contain at least 30% recycled plastic.

Hannah Blythyn said: "Plastic waste and packaging waste are important issues. Every year in the UK, we generate around 11 million tonnes of packaging waste as a whole 2.3 million tonnes of which is plastic packaging waste.

"Wales is a world leader in recycling but we want to go further, we want to take action to minimise the amount of packaging we use, and incentivise better design of products and packaging, so that it can be reused or easily recycled. This could stimulate economic opportunities for Wales and support our aim to become a more circular economy.

"While the consultations are being launched jointly across the whole of the UK, our position as a world leader in recycling means our circumstances are different from the rest of the UK. I am particularly keen to explore whether a DRS for drinks containers would work for Wales, given our already high recycling rate.

"I would like to hear views from all sectors on these proposals as I want to understand the likely impact on local authority income and recycling rates, and also on businesses. I would also like to hear from members of the public.

If a DRS is to be introduced in Wales, shoppers will be expected to pay a deposit on drinks containers and have to manually return empty containers to collection points in order to claim back their deposit, rather than use household waste collections provided by their councils.

“I would therefore urge people in Wales to read and respond to the consultations to make sure Wales’ voice is heard on these issues.”

‘A missed opportunity to provide much-needed clarity’ – Finance Ministers express concerns following meeting between the UK government and the devolved administrations

Following a meeting of the devolved administrations with the Chief Secretary of the Treasury, Liz Truss, in Cardiff today, Welsh Finance Minister Rebecca Evans said:

“I was hoping for much greater clarity on what are becoming very important and pressing issues the closer we get to EU exit day, but disappointingly I am leaving the meeting no more reassured.

“There seems to be a real lack of clarity across the UK Government on what is happening with Brexit but with the very real prospect of a no-deal, this is a huge concern to Welsh Government.

“Along with my Scottish counterpart I pressed the Chief Secretary for clarity on a number of financial issues relating to the impact of Brexit, including the possibility of an emergency budget. The message was clear, a full fiscal event is not on the agenda, adding to the uncertainties we are facing as we prepare to exit.

“The Welsh Government will continue to make the case for Wales to ensure that the interests of Wales are very much at the forefront of discussions.”

Finance Secretary Derek Mackay said:

“I raised a number of issues with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, including urging her to rule out a no-deal Brexit, giving me a cast iron guarantee that all lost EU funding would be replaced

in full and meeting all costs associated with the UK government's changes to public sector pensions. She could do none of these.

“With just weeks to go until the planned EU exit day, the Scottish Government remains deeply concerned about the lack of detail regarding replacement arrangements for EU funding streams, not to mention the severe impact a no-deal could have on our economy and labour market.

“As a responsible government, we will continue to intensify our work to prepare for all Brexit outcomes as best we can and press the UK government to rule out no-deal Brexit and extend the Article 50 process.”