

Helping disabled people into work is key to tackling economic inactivity – Eluned Morgan

Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind is a supported workshop where staff make wooden products using precision cutting equipment and buttons for the furniture industry. They also operate a cardboard recycling service.

It employs people from across South Wales who have a disability or health condition that makes it difficult for them to find or keep employment.

Office for National Statistics figures released today show that unemployment and economic inactivity has fallen in Wales compared to the previous quarter but the Welsh Government in its recently published Employability Plan has made it clear that it is determined to work actively go much further to close the economic inactivity gap between Wales and the UK.

The statistics also show that the proportion of disabled people* who are able to work but who are unemployed in Great Britain is 9.2% – more than twice the proportion of those who are not disabled, which is currently 3.6%.

One of the key actions in the Employability Plan is to provide an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs and takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions. Ensuring there are opportunities for disabled people to find and stay in work is a key element of this.

Eluned Morgan said:

“The Employability plan recognises that different people have different barriers to work. For disabled people, some of the barriers might be physical but all too often they are the result of employers' reluctance to take on disabled people. I am determined to address this and will be talking to some of our key employers across Wales over the summer to see how we can support them to overcome this reluctance.

“Organisations like Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind are doing excellent work to equip disabled people with skills and experience and the opportunity to show employers they are valuable and reliable members of the workforce.”

* According to the Equality Act 2010 definition of disabled.

Minister encourages more people to become foster carers for children in Wales

To mark the start of Foster Care Fortnight, the Minister has written a personal letter to every foster carer in Wales, asking them to help inspire others to consider fostering.

There are currently more than 4,400 children in foster care in Wales. The average age of foster carers is 55, and local authorities need to recruit more foster carers from a wide variety of backgrounds and age.

The Welsh Government has put significant investment over the past three years into the development of National Fostering Framework for Wales (£400k in 2017-18), which is now being implemented across all regions. Similar funding in 2018-19 has gone into the Revenue Support Grant for local authorities.

One of the key aims of the framework is to encourage more people to foster, especially with local authorities fostering services, and to develop a national brand and marketing strategy supported by regional approaches to recruitment and retention.

Foster Care Fortnight 2018 runs from 14th to 27th May.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for all foster carers do in caring and supporting some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

“I have met many foster carers and am always deeply impressed with the dedication and commitment that I see, even while I know that fostering is often a very challenging task.

“I have also had the pleasure of speaking to young people who have experienced care, who have talked to me about how their foster families have supported them, not just by providing a home but with a family environment where they can feel safe, grow and thrive.

“Foster families also help them prepare for the future and achieve their personal outcomes. Fostered young people have told me how their foster carers have helped them to consider opportunities in further education and employment, or given them the confidence to follow other ambitions. What an incredible testimony to the work of the thousands of foster carers and their families here in Wales.

“So I want to say Thank you. What they do is so important for our society and, in particular, the children and young people you are

caring for.”

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford sets out Wales' Brexit priorities

Speaking at the latest in a series of events organised by Wales for Europe, he set out the Welsh Government's 6 priorities. These 6 priorities respect the Brexit vote in 2016 but put Welsh interests at the forefront of a new relationship with the European Union:

- continued full and unfettered access to the single market and participation in a customs union
- a new migration system that links migration more closely to employment
- Wales not to lose a penny of funding as a result of Brexit – a promise made during the referendum campaign
- a fundamentally different constitutional relationship between the devolved governments and the UK Government, which is based on mutual respect
- maintaining current social and environmental protections, including workers' rights
- a transition period to avoid a 'cliff edge'.

The speech comes ahead of today's debate on a Legislative Consent Motion, which seeks the National Assembly's agreement to those aspects of the UK government's EU Withdrawal Bill which have an impact on devolution.

Professor Drakeford said:

“When we started discussions with our Scottish and UK counterparts, the EU Withdrawal Bill would have allowed the UK government to take control of devolved policy areas, such as farming and fishing, after Brexit.

“We are now in a different place. London has changed its position so that all devolved powers and policy areas rest in Cardiff, unless we all agree that some matters will continue to operate temporarily to the existing EU rule book. These will be areas where we all agree that, when the UK leaves the EU, UK-wide rules are needed for a functioning UK internal market.

“The Legislative Consent Motion defends and entrenches devolution while also providing the certainty necessary that the United Kingdom will operate effectively, the other side of the European Union and the shared rule book it has provided.”

Health Secretary announces state-backed professional indemnity for GPs in Wales

The scheme, which is planned to come into force from April 2019, will cover all contracted GPs and other health professionals working in NHS general practice.

The move comes following concerns about increasing indemnity costs, which could potentially drive GPs away from the profession, resulting in an impact on services.

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

Vaughan Gething said:

“We have listened to GPs’ concerns. We understand the impact rising professional indemnity costs is having on the workforce and the potential for future pressure if different indemnity practices were in place in England and Wales.

“We’ve contributed towards the increasing indemnity costs through the annual uplift in GP pay and expenses since 2017, but today we are going further by responding to GP’s concerns with a long-term and sustainable solution.

“This further demonstrates our commitment to invest in primary care in Wales and attract more GPs to work in Wales, helping us to make sure our health service is sustainable in the long-term.

“I hope today’s announcement gives reassurance to our hard working GP workforce.”

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of BMA Cymru Wales’ GP Committee (GPC Wales) and Deputy Chair, Dr Peter Horvath-Howard said:

“GPC Wales is very positive that the move towards a state backed indemnity system for all GPs in Wales represents a very important

step towards increasing the sustainability of general practice in Wales by addressing this significant cost pressure on GPs.

“It is reassuring to hear that the scheme will cover the wider practice clinical team, and will ensure that any vicarious liabilities GP partners have with the wider multi-disciplinary teams working across clusters is covered.

“We look forward to working through the details with Welsh Government who have clearly recognised the need for action on this complex issue.”

Children in care are doing well in Wales – new research shows

The Welsh Government commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) to carry out an analysis of outcomes for children and young people 4 to 5 years after a final Care Order.

The study set out to explore the placement journeys for children in care in Wales, how these compare with the outcomes aspired to in their Care Plan and the key success factors associated with positive placements.

The large scale analysis involved all of the 1,076 children and young people with a final Care Order made in Wales in the 12 month period from April 2012 to March 2013. A smaller representative sub-sample of 79 cases was then drawn from five local authority areas to allow more in-depth analysis to be conducted.

The report found:

- Over three quarters of the whole cohort of children experienced a high level of placement stability – with either no placement move (30%) or only one (46%) placement move over the 4-5 year period that the study looked at.
- 71% of the smaller sub-sample had overall positive outcomes in relation to their home environment, communication and attachments; education; physical health and the absence of offending; 19% had mixed outcomes; and 10% had overall negative outcomes;
- Whilst 78% of the whole cohort of children was officially recorded as having a primary need for care relating to abuse and neglect, the in-depth analysis found that almost all children in the sub-sample had experienced abuse and neglect before the Care Order was made.

The study is part of the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children

Ministerial Advisory Group. The Group is taking forward a significant programme of work to help safely reduce the number of children coming into care, improve outcomes for children already in care and better support care leavers to adulthood and independence.

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

“Improving outcomes and life chances for care experienced children is a key priority for me. This Government is committed to ensuring the life chances of looked after children are the same as for other children.

“I am pleased to see many children and young people are doing well in care in Wales, with over three quarters of the children this study looked at experiencing a high level of placement stability. The study highlights the good work that is taking place by both children’s social services and their education partners throughout Wales to secure the best possible outcomes for children in care.

“However, there are still significant challenges for children in care in Wales, particularly in supporting children who are dealing with the impact of abuse and trauma. We must learn and use the findings from this work to help ensure the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children are addressed in a therapeutic way and continue to focus on providing high quality and long-term placements that will help to meet their needs.”