

New screening for pregnant women now offered in Wales

Wales is the first UK nation to introduce Non-invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) across the whole country as an addition to the existing antenatal screening offer.

The test will be offered to women who have taken up the initial offer of screening and are found to be at a higher chance of Down's, Edward's or Patau's syndrome.

The NIPT test is offered as an alternative to an invasive test as this part of the pathway. As an invasive test has a small risk of miscarriage, offering NIPT is expected to reduce this risk as fewer invasive tests are expected to be undertaken in Wales.

The Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Our antenatal screening programme plays an important role in providing expectant mothers with the information and support they need throughout their pregnancy. I'm pleased Wales is leading the way by offering NIPT as part of our programme. This more accurate test will reduce the need of further invasive tests in most cases, therefore reducing the incidence of miscarriages related to invasive procedures.”

From today, combined screening for Edward's and Patau's in the first trimester for women having one baby, and combined screening for Down's, Edward's and Patau's in the first trimester for twin pregnancies, are also introduced in Wales.

The decision to implement NIPT in Wales follows expert advice from the UK National Screening Committee. Its introduction will be evaluated over the next three years.

Sharon Hillier; Director of Screening for Public Health Wales, said:

“It is important that women are supported with information about the conditions and the screening offered so they can make the right decision for them as to whether they want to accept this offer.

“We have worked closely with parents, charities and health professionals to improve the pathway and the information that we provide to pregnant women in Wales.

“We've taken the opportunity to update the pre-test written information as well as producing it as a short film. Health

professionals involved in discussing the screening with women have undertaken training which has focused on personalised choice and up to date information on the conditions screened for.”

[The Commission on Justice in Wales visits Treforest on the latest leg of its fact-finding tour](#)

Amongst the issues for discussion are access to legal services, diversity in the profession, ideas for reducing crime and the rehabilitation of offenders.

The Welsh Government set up the Commission on Justice in Wales in 2017 to review the operation of the legal and justice system in Wales and set a long term vision for the future.

The work of the Commission, chaired by the former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd and comprising prominent members of the justice and legal community in Wales is well underway.

Since February the Commission has held events in Bangor, Wrexham and Aberystwyth, to hear the views of people working in, and affected by, the justice and legal system including prisoners and staff at Berwyn prison near Wrexham. Next month, the Commission will travel to Scotland to consider the experiences of our Scottish counterparts.

The Commission is seeking written evidence until early June before it moves onto oral evidence. The Commission for Wales wants to hear the opinions from as wide a range of people as possible about how the justice system can be improved.

The former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd said:

“We are engaging widely with people and organisations across Wales to ensure that our findings and recommendations about the future of the justice and legal system are sound and enduring.

“We need to find ways to build on the existing good collaborative working between governments, the police, the prison and probation service, lawyers and the courts to reduce crime, promote rehabilitation and tackle the very serious problems facing people in rural and post-industrial areas accessing legal advice in their communities. Our visit to the Rhondda Cynon Taf area on Friday will

be another important step in this process.”

£50m fund to deliver joined-up care closer to home

The fund is being targeted at delivering effective integrated and preventative services for children with complex needs, people with learning disabilities, older people and carers.

- £30m is being invested in projects that help older people maintain their independence, avoid hospital admissions and prevent delayed discharges.
- £15m is being invested in services that support people with learning disabilities, children with complex needs and carers.
- £3m is being invested in the continued delivery of a National Integrated Autism Service (IAS) for Wales, which will improve support services for children, young people and adults by providing them with lifetime support.
- £2m is going to continue the national roll-out of the Welsh Community Care Information System, a common IT system for health boards and social services which provides a shared record of care, allowing practitioners to coordinate and manage work across organisational boundaries.

In addition, funding has been identified to support ICF capital projects in 2018-19. The capital programme is already funding a number of accommodation based solutions to support older persons' housing needs. These include home adaptations, building conversions and new-build schemes. The details of the capital programme will be announced by Ministers in due course.

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

“The £50m we’re investing in the integrated care fund this year demonstrates our commitment to delivering effective integrated services across health, social services, housing and the third sector.

“It will help deliver new innovative and seamless services for children, older people and for people with learning disabilities and other complex needs, ensuring they receive the care and support they need to live the lives they want to lead.”

Senior MEP in Wales to talk Brexit

The Welsh Government has invited Elmar Brok to Wales to discuss its proposals for a Brexit that protects jobs and the Welsh economy. A leading member of the Group of the European People's Party (the largest political group in the European Parliament), he is one of the 6 members on the Parliament's Brexit Steering Group, which will play a crucial role in determining the Parliament's views on the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement. The European Parliament has a decisive role in the Brexit process, because it must approve the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by the European Commission.

During his visit, Mr Brok will address the First Minister's European Advisory Group and speak at a Wales Governance Centre event, followed by a short Q&A session with the public in Cardiff Bay.

Speaking ahead of Mr Brok's visit, the First Minister said:

"Elmar Brok is one of the longest serving, most experienced and most influential members of the European Parliament.

"I look forward to hearing his thoughts on the current state of the Brexit negotiations and his views on the prospects for a future trade agreement between the UK and the European Union. I am also interested in listening to his views on the future of the EU, notably the priorities for the forthcoming budget round and how the EU, and the next European Parliament, will look without the UK."

Mark Drakeford said:

"I am delighted to be welcoming Elmar Brok to Wales, having had the opportunity to talk to him about Brexit on several occasions over the last 2 years. This is an opportunity for us to outline our plans for a sensible Brexit that protects Wales' economy and jobs. We need to find new ways of working together with our friends and neighbours in Europe on our common challenges."

The First Minister will hold a private meeting with Elmar Brok ahead of the European Advisory Group.

Latest in Welsh language technology on show

Like 'hiraeth', 'cwtsh' is something that only the Welsh truly understand. 'Cwtsh' evokes feelings of comfort, cosiness and peace. What better title therefore for a mediation and mindfulness app entirely through the medium of Welsh?

"Ap Cwtsh" will be among the latest developments in Welsh language technology that will be showcased today at the 'Pioneering Wales: Cymraeg 2050 Technology' event at Tramshed Tech in Cardiff.

A virtual reality experience which helps users understand how it feels to live with dementia, again through the medium of Welsh, will be launched at the event with the help of TV presenter Beti George, a prominent dementia campaigner.

The technology has all been funded by the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 grant. The grant, a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers, provides funds to innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh.

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

"We want the use of Welsh to be a routine part of everyday life so that speakers at all levels feel confident in using it in formal and informal situations.

"Technology is an increasingly important part of that every day life and it is vital therefore that we continue to develop Welsh language technology so that people are able to use their Welsh online as well as in real life. Recent research has shown that languages like Icelandic are under threat because of the dominance of English in technology, so it is vital that we invest in ensuring Welsh has a strong presence online as well as in our communities.

"It is especially important for something like the Dementia VR project because, when a person develops dementia, they may often lose the ability to communicate in their second language.

"I am thrilled that these projects are now coming to fruition. I'm under no illusion about the challenge of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and I'm delighted there are so many organisations and people with the skills and commitment to join us in this task"

Other technology on show includes:

- WordNet – a project to construct a WordNet (lexical database) for the Welsh language.
- Mapio Cymru – Welsh language version of OpenStreetMap that will allow Welsh language mapping of Wales freely under an open licence.
- Bys a Bawd – an interactive song-based resource for families and children.
- Wici Caerdydd – aims to increase the number of Welsh language articles available on Wikipedia, and a project to promote the use of Welsh through Snapchat.