

Additional £10 million to help relieve winter pressures in the NHS announced

The funding will be used to support health boards, the ambulance service and social care services across Wales treat and care for the increase in people using services at this time of year.

It will help relieve pressure across the whole system from primary care through to hospital care and social services in Wales, for example enabling older people to leave hospital more quickly through the use of support packages where appropriate.

The Health Secretary expects health boards to work with their partners to determine the best use of the investment based on local pressures, priorities and capacity.

The Health Secretary has also taken action to relieve pressure on GPs by relaxing the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) element of the GP contract until the end of March 2018. The decision recognises the impact of winter pressures not only on the NHS, but on GPs and the wider Primary Care team across Wales. The action being taken will enable GPs and practice nurses to manage their most vulnerable and chronically sick patients during the winter period.

Vaughan Gething said:

“NHS organisations have been planning for this period since the end of last winter, supported by £50 million of funding from us to help them balance urgent and planned care activity.

“Despite this significant investment, what we have seen in the recent days is a system that is under extreme pressure. During this challenging period, I want to provide the NHS in Wales with an extra £10 million of new investment to help front line staff care for our patients through this winter.

“We know both Primary Care and Accident and Emergency (A&E) services across Wales are currently extremely busy. The ambulance service has reported increases of up to 50% in life threatening incidents when compared to last year at times over Christmas. Our 111 service received twice as many calls as predicted on New Year’s Day and the Out of Hours service continues to face huge demands. This additional funding will go some way in helping relieve the pressure on the system.

“I would like to thank all of our NHS staff who are showing, day in day out, great resilience in responding with compassion for patients. Their commitment to their patients and the care they are giving should be highly commended. The system only works because of

staff working within our NHS. They have my gratitude.”

[Global professional services firm to create 185 jobs in Cardiff](#)

The company will make Cardiff the base for its UK Affinity business. Affinity includes Aon’s consumer business and also specialises in developing, marketing and administering customised insurance programs and specialty market solutions for organisations and their members or affiliates.

The Cardiff Capital Region is already host to household names such as Admiral, Go Compare and Deloitte.

A large part of the success of the sector in Wales is down to the availability of talented staff. Access to training and employability projects such as the successful Welsh Financial Services Graduate Programme is enabling the sector in Wales to retain the best of Welsh graduate talent.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“At the heart of our recently-launched national strategy Prosperity for All: economic action plan is a commitment to develop a new and dynamic relationship between Government and business based on the principle of public investment with a social purpose.

“The quality of life enjoyed by people living and working in Cardiff has long been recognised by employers; excellent road, rail and air connections coupled with genuinely affordable housing and top quality education and cultural facilities render Cardiff one of the most sought after locations in Europe for the financial and professional services sector.

“I am delighted to welcome Aon to join the growing list of prestigious financial and professional services companies who have enjoyed growth and prosperity here. I look forward to working alongside them as we build a fairer Wales and seek to deliver our ambition of prosperity for all.”

Martyn Denney, Aon Affinity MD, said:

“Cardiff has a strong and vibrant insurance and financial services sector with excellent customer service capability, which were key factors in the decision to open an office in the city. We’re

delighted to be able to bring our business to Wales.”

First Minister's New Year message

“As the year draws to a close, it is a good time to reflect on the events of the last 12 months and look ahead to the year to come.

“2018 offers us new opportunities and a chance to build on the progress we have made this year, and over the past 2 decades of devolution.

“There are certainly challenges and uncertainty ahead, but many reasons for optimism too. I look forward to my ministerial team and I driving forward our ambitious plans for Wales – focusing on growing the economy, creating jobs, supporting our public services and improving the day-to-day lives of the people of Wales.

“I want 2018 to be a year that unites us – a year in which we celebrate all we have in common and work together to build the fair, open, prosperous nation that we all want Wales to become.

“I wish you and your families a very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.”

Extra funding to help Mudiad Meithrin contribute to 1 million Welsh speakers

The organisation will receive £3.031m per year for the next two financial years. This comprises £2.031m of annual funding and an extra £1m per year as part of the budget deal between Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Government.

The funding follows Mudiad Meithrin's paper 'Meithrin Miliwn' in summer 2017, outlining the steps needed to enable the Mudiad to respond positively to the ambition of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The extra funding will allow Mudiad Meithrin to:

- offer additional support to establish new settings in priority locations across Wales where there is lack of Welsh medium provision.

- develop alternative models for new cylchoedd meithrin.
- strengthen Mudiad Meithrin's regional and national structures to support its increased membership.

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

“Reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050 is a very ambitious target. Education and in particular early years education is key to this and this is why we have set targets to expand Welsh-medium provision by 40 Welsh-medium nursery groups by 2021 and by 150 Welsh medium nursery groups over the next decade.

“As the Welsh-medium early years and childcare specialist, Mudiad Meithrin has a vital role to play so I am delighted to announce this extra funding to help them contribute to this target.”

Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies, Mudiad Meithrin Chief Executive added:

“The additional investment by Welsh Government will enable Mudiad Meithrin to open more Welsh-medium childcare provision – a key element of the government's language strategy, ‘Cymraeg 2050’. The early years is integral to the success of that strategy and this investment highlights its importance.”

[Almost £5m Welsh Government investment in regeneration projects brings Christmas cheer to the Tramshed](#)

The capital investment will go to projects across Wales, identified by local authorities, which aim to maximise their economic impact and help to support regeneration in Welsh towns. The projects have strong links to wider Welsh Government objectives, including supporting people into employment, training and skills development, health and well-being and tackling poverty.

Minister Rebecca Evans AM said:

“These projects will help towards work to regenerate towns across Wales, and will be used for a range of projects, from clearing derelict buildings in Rhyl for redevelopment, to refurbish old buildings to create housing in Swansea.

“The Tramshed is a great example of how Welsh Government support can help to kickstart regeneration. This new investment will help local councils to regenerate areas, in line with our wider priorities, such as supporting people into employment or training, health and well-being, and tackling poverty.

“Communities across Wales will feel the benefit of this money, and I look forward to seeing how these projects make a difference to people’s lives.”

Some of the projects include:

- £1m towards the restoration of the Grade II* listed Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery and the construction of adjacent contemporary new building which will house the new Brecon library, rooms for education, community and conference use and retail areas for local produce
- Swansea Council will receive £300,000 to support the refurbishment of three properties, to create 10 housing units in Swansea city centre, and to create commercial floor space in three currently vacant premises
- In Shotton, £162,000 of investment will be used to help purchase and redevelop the former Tata Steel Sports and Social Club. RegenA partnership led by Care and Repair North Wales will see the complex used to provide training, health support, sports and other services, focused on the well-being of local people
- £80,000 to help fund the conversion of an old college building in Barry to create the BSC Squared Business Centre, a dedicated business start up and incubator space to support micro businesses and SMEs looking to establish themselves and grow locally.

The Tramshed received £500,000 of support through the Welsh Government’s £20m Town Centre Loans Fund, which is helping to bring underused sites in town centres back to life. Once loans are repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans.

250 jobs were created or safeguarded as part of the Tramshed project, which has created 18,500 square feet of conference space as well as space for businesses to develop and a place for community events to take place. The area has seen a significant increase in footfall as a result of the project.