

## Water protocol to protect consumers – and devolution settlement

The UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs currently has intervention powers which mean he or she can repeal Assembly legislation or intervene in the exercise of devolved functions which he or she believes risks having a serious adverse impact on water resources, water supply or water quality in England. Welsh Government Ministers do not have reciprocal powers.

The protocol, which is being laid jointly before the UK Parliament and National Assembly for Wales, paves the way for the repeal of these outdated intervention powers next year.

The protocol reaffirms the close working between the Welsh and UK Governments on essential matters of water resources, water supply and water quality. It also dictates no action or inaction of either administration should have any serious adverse impact on either Wales or England respectively.

Speaking ahead of the laying of the protocol, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

“The introduction of this protocol addresses an existing imbalance in the devolution settlement that could, in theory, result in UK Government Ministers intervening in matters that are the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

“I am pleased with the constructive and positive way in which both administrations have approached the drafting and implementation of an agreement which, importantly, means water consumers on both sides of the border are safeguarded”.

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## Winter resilience is coming with extra beds, Choose Well and My Winter Health Plan

Mr Gething outlined a number of positive actions aimed at easing the pressures on hospitals including an increase in available bed capacity and the strengthening of emergency ambulatory care services to enable patients with specific conditions to be treated without needing to stay in hospital

overnight.

The positive steps were announced as NHS Wales Chief Executive Dr Andrew Goodall called on people to Choose Well and make the right decisions of where to get advice and treatment if they are unwell to help ease pressure on GPs and hospital emergency departments.

Dr Goodall also launched a new initiative, My Winter Health Plan, aimed at helping people with long-term physical or mental health conditions provide vital information for visiting health professionals to allow more people to be seen and treated at home and avoid unnecessary trips to A&E.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Winter is always a challenging time for our health and social care services and hard-working staff here in Wales, as it is across the UK.

“A wide range of positive actions are planned to further improve local and national resilience, including an increase in available bed capacity both in hospital and in the community to mitigate against the anticipated rise in the number of patients with multiple conditions who require admission to hospital over winter.

“As last year, we will see the strengthening of emergency ambulatory care services to enable patients with specific conditions to be treated without needing to stay in hospital overnight wherever possible.

“Other actions taken to improve resilience this winter include strengthening seven-day working; increasing senior decision-making at the hospital front door; extending working hours; additional support for out-of-hours services and care homes; improved use of social workers in hospitals and greater use of pharmacy support.

NHS Wales Chief Executive Dr Andrew Goodall said:

“Making the right choice of which services and treatments will save you time and make sure you and your family get the right care quickly. I know NHS staff will be working hard this winter. Choose well to help them help you.”

Dr Goodall said 10,000 My Winter Health Plans, which also contain winter health and care tips, are also being distributed by health boards, local authorities and a number of key organisations including Age Cymru.

He said:

“The aim of My Winter Health Plan is to provide people with chronic conditions, or their carers, with a form that they can display on their fridge or in an easy to see part of their home. If they then receive a home visit in an emergency from a health and care professional, family member or neighbour, that person will have useful key information to help them make a more informed decision on what action to take. It is anticipated that this will help avoid unnecessary journeys to hospital.”

Dr Goodall reminded people that everybody can help ease winter pressures by using the wide range of health and care professionals in communities for advice and treatment when they are unwell.

“Community pharmacists can advise you and your family on minor ailments, coughs or colds. They can offer expert advice, over-the-counter medicines and prescriptions and, if needed, advise whether you need to see your GP,” said Dr Goodall.

“By making this vital choice you can often be seen and treated more quickly, saving you time and freeing up GPs and hospital A&E departments for those who really need them.

“For persistent symptoms, infections or if your child has a fever, go and see your GP.

“If it isn’t a life-threatening emergency but you aren’t sure where to go, contact NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 or go to [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) for the Symptom Checker.

“A&E is for people who are very sick or badly injured and unless this is the case you will get the right care quicker by choosing well. Even if the A&E is closer, it is not the best place to go to for most health problems.

“There is lots we can all do, like ensuring prescriptions are ordered in advance. Friends and relatives of older people can help by checking in on them and making sure they are keeping their homes warm – 18-21C – to prevent any existing health problems getting worse.”

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## **Projects which Get Creative with Cymraeg announced**

£425,000 has been awarded to 26 innovative projects that promote Welsh in the community and Welsh language technology, the Minister for the Welsh Language

and Lifelong learning, Eluned Morgan has announced.

The Cymraeg 2050 Grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It will provide small grants of up to £20,000 each to fund 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.

Projects include a website that enables Welsh speaking volunteers to create audio Welsh language content for those with sight loss and a scheme to develop technology to enable Welsh speakers at risk of losing their ability to speak to build personal synthetic voices so they can continue to communicate in their native language.

£300,000 was originally allocated to the scheme, however, due to the exceptional quality of the bids received the fund has been increased.

The Minister 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. The projects announced today will make it easier for people to use the language, whether face to face in the community and in the workplace or through digital platforms.

It is very heartening that we have had to increase the fund to accommodate the excellent projects put forward to us. We're 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 who are willing to join us in this task”

The grants have been awarded to the following projects:

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## [Increase in alcohol-related deaths in Wales – new report shows](#)

The 2017 annual report for the Welsh Government's 10 year substance misuse strategy, Working Together to Reduce Harm, shows that while there has been an increase in both alcohol-related and drug-related deaths, good progress has been made on providing quicker treatment.

An increasing number of people referred for treatment are receiving support within the 20 day waiting time target. Treatment outcomes are also improving, with 77% of people reported a reduction in their substance misuses following

treatment in 2016/17, compared to 69.2% in 2012/13.

The report shows nearly half of people assessed with a substance misuse problem in Wales were suffering from problematic alcohol use. The report also highlights that in 2016, 20% of adults (or 1 in 5) reported drinking more than the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended 14 units a week limit for alcohol consumption.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said the new figures show there is an urgent need to address the affordability of alcohol, as part of wider efforts to tackle alcohol-related harm.

The Welsh Government recently unveiled a new Bill to introduce a minimum price for the sale of alcohol, as part of efforts to tackle the availability of strong, cheap alcohol.

There has also been an increase in drug use and drug-related deaths. Estimates of problematic use of opioids, cocaine and crack, amphetamine and new psychoactive substances indicate that there are around 49,370 individuals in Wales, aged 15-64 years who are using these types of drugs, including those in contact with health and criminal justice services.

In 2016, there were 271 drug poisoning deaths (involving both legal and illegal drugs) in Wales. Of these, 192 were drug misuse deaths (involving illegal drugs).

The Welsh Government is stepping up efforts to tackle avoidable drug-related deaths by initiating new awareness campaigns and by working closely with local harm reduction groups to shape further action to reduce drug deaths in Wales.

Alongside a range of other interventions, the Welsh Government is continuing to work with partners on developing the Take Home Naloxone programme – a drug which temporarily reverses the effects of opiate overdose. Since 2009, a total of over 15,000 kits have been distributed throughout Wales with 1,654 reported uses. Naloxone is available in every Community Drug Treatment Service and in all prisons in Wales.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Substance misuse is a major health issue that affects the well-being of individuals, families and communities across the length and breadth of Wales.

“The Welsh Government invests almost £50m a year in tackling the harms associated within substance misuse. But while we invest and work hard in reducing harm, we need to take additional action to prevent that harm happening in the first place.

“Preventing future substance misuse is as important as treating the established problem. We know that the harm associated with alcohol misuse in particular is a pressing concern and that's why there is

now an urgent need to tackle the affordability of cheap, strong alcohol, through introducing a minimum unit price for the sale of alcohol.

“This report shows, however, that when people need help with their substance misuse problem they can access it. I’m pleased there has been a significant improvement in the number of people with a substance misuse problem being seen within the 20 day target time, while more people are telling us they’re successfully reducing their dependence on alcohol or drugs following treatment.

“But we’re not complacent. Our aim is to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse to enable them to make informed choices and to know where they can seek out help and support – because each death caused by alcohol or drug misuse is one that can be and should be avoided.”

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## **“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility” – Huw Irranca-Davies**

Launching National Safeguarding Week, the Minister said people who have suffered abuse and neglect are encouraged to come forward and share their experiences with the appropriate authorities, so that society learn and recognise the signs to prevent abuse happening in the future.

Last year, a new law was introduced in Wales – the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act – which strengthens existing safeguarding arrangements for children by placing on relevant partners, such as the NHS, Police, Probation and youth offending teams, a duty to report where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is at risk.

The Act introduces parallel provisions for relevant partners to report to the local authority someone suspected to be an adult at risk of abuse or neglect. This is supplemented by a new duty for the local authority to make enquires to determine whether any action is required to safeguard adults at risk.

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

“The abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults is not acceptable, and its prevention is a major priority for the Welsh Government. That’s why we’ve introduced a new law that that strengthens the arrangements for safeguarding children and adults in Wales.

“It’s vitally important that we encourage people who have suffered abuse and neglect to come forward and share their experiences with the appropriate authorities, so that everyone can learn and recognise the signs if someone is being abused, and to prevent it happening in the future.

“Each and every one of us in Wales has a responsibility for keeping people safe from harm and neglect.”

Safeguarding Boards in Wales have designated the week commencing 13 November as Safeguarding Week.

The Minister added:

“I welcome Safeguarding Week as an opportunity to recognise the work of frontline staff and to raise awareness of the role everybody has to play in safeguarding both children and adults.”