

£7m to improve the mental health of children and young people in Wales

The new investment will support the implementation of the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations made by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee in its Mind over Matter report last year.

The funding will build on previous investments to improve child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and will also support the whole-school approach to improve mental health and wellbeing in schools.

The Minister will make the announcement during a conference in Cardiff today, which will bring together Wales' directors of education to discuss 'Developing a partnership Approach for Mental health and Wellbeing'.

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething said:

"Improving mental health for everyone is a top priority for me as Health Minister and for the Welsh Government.

"In Wales, we've taken action to put services in place to help children and young people deal with the pressures of everyday life. In recent years we have been able to provide additional funding to expand the numbers of specialist staff and develop new services.

"The extra funding I'm announcing today is a significant and meaningful investment to help us do more to protect, improve and support the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people by further developing these services."

The £7.1m investment is in addition to £1.4m being invested by the Welsh Government in a programme of mental health in-reach support for schools to strengthen the support from CAMHS in schools in four pilot areas across Wales.

Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, said:

"The mental health and wellbeing of our children & young people is an absolute priority, and our 'whole school' approach ensures this is central to the way schools work and touch on all the different aspects of school life.

"This funding will help build on the dedicated, professional support we provide to schools, including through our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), to ensure our pupils are fully supported through each stage of their education."

'No deal' could have devastating impact on Welsh farming and fisheries – Lesley Griffiths

Speaking a day before the meaningful vote and ahead of her meeting with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, the Minister said a 'no deal' should be avoided at all costs to protect our valued rural and coastal communities.

Welsh red meat and shellfish will be particularly vulnerable in the event of a 'no deal', with 90% of our red meat exports and also 90% of shellfish exports going to the European Union. The prospect of high tariffs in the event of a no deal Brexit will only add to the cost of exporting.

Leaving the EU without a deal would also mean all consignments of live animals and products of animal origin will need an export health certificate and need to enter the EU through a Border Inspection Post (not available in Calais) – adding to the costs of production and bureaucracy.

Welsh shellfish are transported live and delivered within 24 hours from Welsh nets to EU markets. Any delays in this supply chain will result in poorer quality sea food and an increase in mortality, which will lead to a reduction in prices. Ongoing problems could even cause the industry to collapse.

The Minister said:

“We have always been clear a no deal Brexit is not an option for Wales’ farming and fishing industries. Crashing out of the European Union could decimate our rural and coastal economies and must be avoided at all costs.

“Any no deal scenario would be bad for Welsh farmers as 90% of our red meat exports go to the EU. High tariffs, increased bureaucracy and delays at the border will only add to costs of exporting.

“But a no deal combined with the removal of UK import tariffs would be the worst case scenario for Welsh and British agriculture, allowing cheap food imports at a time when our exports could be subject to tariffs of up to 50% for some sectors.

“This would also be the case for our shellfish industry, which is equally dependent on exporting to the EU. Any delays at ports preventing delivery of the live products within 24 hours could potentially wipe out the industry.”

Lesley Griffiths added:

“Our food companies are already experiencing difficulties recruiting from the EU due to the initial drop in the value of sterling. A further reduction would only exacerbate these difficulties.

“I make no apology for outlining these very real prospects of a no deal. We cannot underestimate or ignore the truly devastating impact crashing out of the European Union will have on our industries.

“As a government, we will do all we can to support the sector to prepare for Brexit and the challenges ahead. Through our EU Transition Fund, we have already provided £6m for projects to help our farming, fishing and food industries ensure their competitiveness in changing markets and enable them to thrive in a post-Brexit world.”

Appointment of a Member to the Board of Natural Resources Wales announced

Geraint's appointment means the Board now has 13 members, including the Chief Executive. Geraint is a first language Welsh speaker, who will strengthen the Welsh language skills of the Board. He has been an upland farmer in North Wales for 20 years, and is an advocate for producing sustainable food whilst delivering environmental goods.

Minister Lesley Griffiths said:

“Following the recent scheme to recruit new members for NRW's Board, I asked the Advisory Panel to look again at those who applied and are able to converse fluently in Welsh.

“I attach great importance to NRW's role and the work of its Board and am pleased to announce Geraint appointment to the Board.”

Sir David Henshaw said:

“I am looking forward to working with Geraint and supporting NRW to deliver for Wales.”

Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body – employing 1,900 staff across Wales with a budget of £180 million. It was formed in April 2013, largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions.

Geraint Davies has been farming for over 20 years in the Snowdonia National Park, North Wales.

He is an advocate for producing sustainable food whilst delivering environmental products.

His land management experience encompasses upland habitat management including upland water retention, ancient woodland, soil health and effective grassland management. He has a particular interest in creating and maintaining bird habitat on his farm.

Geraint is the former Wales Chair and Director of Nature Friendly Farming Network, Director of Partneriaeth Penllyn, Chair of the Farmers’ Union of Wales Younger Voice Committee as well as being active in local committees in Meirionnydd.

Geraint is a fluent Welsh speaker.

[Welsh Government and Thales to work together on £20m cyber centre in Blaenau Gwent](#)

The National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) will be the first research and development facility of its kind in Wales, and will provide the perfect setting for SMEs and microbusinesses to test and develop their digital concepts.

It will also provide a research lab in which big multi nationals can develop major technology advances and will connect Wales to major tech centres across the UK and globally.

Not only will the cyber centre help Wales to exploit the global opportunities of digital transformation, it will also equip businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of large regional and national projects.

The NDEC, located in Blaenau Gwent, will be delivered by Thales in collaboration with the University of South Wales (USW).

The University will run an Advanced Cyber Institute at the Centre that will provide a base for major, multi million pound academic research and will also operate a Digital Education Centre that will enable SMEs, schools and individuals with the skills they need to protect themselves online.

As well as providing a vital facility for Welsh SMEs and academic research, the NDEC will also root technology giant Thales firmly in the South Wales valleys. The centre will be managed by a small team, some of whom have already been recruited from the local community.

Both the Welsh Government and Thales have committed £10m each to the project which is expected to generate significant income. All elements, apart from the educational aspects of the centre, are expected to be fully self-sufficient within five years.

Announcing the Welsh Government's partnership with Thales, Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

"I am delighted that the Welsh Government is working in partnership with global technology company Thales on a new £20m cyber centre that will be located in Blaenau Gwent and right at the heart of our Tech Valleys project.

The centre will help ensure that Wales exploits the global opportunities of digital transformation, provide a base for ground breaking research and will equip businesses of all shapes and sizes with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of large regional and national projects.

I am confident that through our partnership with Thales and the University of South Wales we will work to stimulate and create employment in high value technology businesses – an ambition that is right at the heart of our Tech Valleys project."

Speaking of the announcement, Gareth Williams, Vice President, Secure Communications and Information Systems, Thales, said:

"We are very pleased to be working with the Welsh Government, University of South Wales and Blaenau Gwent Council to develop and deliver the NDEC. This will act as a cornerstone of our cyber security capabilities in the UK, providing a test bed for our technology, whilst also providing a catalyst for regeneration in the region.

This highly technical and accessible facility will be a centre of cyber and digital development and education, and a connection for South Wales to major technology centres across the United Kingdom."

Professor Julie Lydon, University of South Wales (USW) Vice-Chancellor, said:

“USW is already a recognised expert in cyber security, with our Newport-based National Cyber Security Academy (NCSA) working closely with businesses to give students real-life experience in the sector.

This expertise in preparing students for a career in industry means we are ideally placed to support the NDEC’s aim of harnessing academic research and graduate education to develop market insight, enhance technological capability, and develop a skilled labour force in Ebbw Vale and the wider South Wales region through its educational outreach, CPD courses, and support for SMEs.

This project will be a significant step in building the region’s reputation in the ever-expanding global market for cyber graduates and research expertise.”

The Tech Valleys project is a key commitment of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys.

[Up to £210m opens the door to more self-builders in Wales](#)

Through Self-Build Wales:

- the Development Bank of Wales will offer loans on pre-agreed plots
- the loans will be repayment free until the new home is mortgaged allowing people to build their new home and cover living costs
- successful applicants can choose to use an approved builder or in certain circumstances do the work themselves
- local authorities and housing associations will make plots available with planning and site requirements complete
- every plot will have a ‘Plot Passport’ including approved designs, an estimated build cost and options for personalising the home
- approved applicants can reserve a plot by providing a 25% deposit on the plot cost. The Welsh Government through the Development Bank of Wales will provide the rest of the funding.

£210m is the projected investment over the term of the scheme as the initial £40m Welsh Government investment will be recycled.

Housing and Local Government Minister Julie James said:

“We want to make self-build available to many more people in Wales, not just the most privileged households. Finding the land, navigating planning consents and being able to afford to self-build while covering the cost of living can be real barriers.

“We have launched this scheme in partnership with local authorities to overcome all of these barriers. This offers a route into home ownership for people who want to stay in their local area but haven’t previously been able to afford to buy there. It also offers older and disabled people the opportunity to build custom adaptive housing that meets their needs in the communities where they want to live.

“Figures suggest an average self-build house in the UK costs only 70-75% of its final value because no developer profits are involved. This puts that benefit into the pocket of the homeowner. At around 10% of new homes the UK has a much lower rate of self-building than other countries around the world.

“As we work to increase the amount of housing available, this scheme will help people who wouldn’t normally think of self-build to consider it seriously.

“The scheme will launch in late spring this year, and in the coming months there will be more information available on the Your Home in Wales website.”

Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

“I am pleased that we are using the capital funding in our Budget to support schemes such as Self-Build Wales, helping people to build their own homes whilst stimulating our housing and property market.”

Andrew Baddeley-Chappell, CEO of the National Custom and Self-Build Association said:

“Most of us aspire to build our own homes, yet despite the growth in the sector, too few currently achieve that dream. Putting the homeowner in charge leads to more homes of better quality and value. It helps bond the homeowner to the community where such homes are built. This package of measures sends a clear message that Wales welcomes and supports self-builders and we are excited to see the positive benefits that will flow from this announcement.”