

Over £100,000 to support the childcare sector in Wales

The additional money will be used to increase the number of childcare places available across Wales, including in Blaenau Gwent, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Caerphilly and Gwynedd and Anglesey – the seven local authorities chosen to work with the Welsh Government to pilot the new childcare offer from September 2017.

The funding will also help childcare businesses to manage their finances and will ensure they are able to access more targeted support and advice from the Welsh Government's business support service, Business Wales.

Speaking about the funding, the Economy Secretary said:

“Developing a flexible childcare offer is a top priority for the Welsh Government, and one vital element of the challenge is ensuring the necessary childcare places are available to families right across the country.

“The additional funding I am announcing today will help to secure up to an additional 450 child care places across Wales over the next two years. It will also be used to improve the business support available to the sector including child minders and to help businesses improve how they manage their finances and grow sustainably.

“Ultimately it will be used to strengthen and develop the resilience of Wales' childcare sector so it is well placed to deliver the flexible childcare offer that we know families right across Wales want and need.”

The Communities and Children Secretary, Carl Sargeant, said:

“Access to affordable, high quality childcare enables parents to work, thereby increasing economic growth and helping to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. It also provides opportunities and long term benefits for our children and improves their life chances.

“I welcome this additional funding for childcare in Wales, and am looking forward to working with the Economy Secretary and the sector to increase the number of child care places available.”

Business Wales will begin offering proactive support to childcare sector businesses later this Autumn.

New adult gender identity service to be established in Wales

To coincide with Pride Cymru, the Health Secretary has announced a significant step forward in healthcare for transgender people, with the establishment of specialist hospital-based services in Wales for the first time.

Improvements to community-based care will also be made, with a network of General Practitioners across Wales with a specialist interest in gender identity healthcare able to provide more care closer to people's home, which will improve access and experience for people needing care.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Over the last few years, we have seen an increase in demand for transgender health services in Wales. As part of our commitment to improve health and wellbeing for all, this year we made additional funding available within the Welsh Government budget to improve gender identity provision in Wales.

“The new services I'm announcing today means all but the most specialist services will soon be delivered in Wales, closer to people's homes, which will improve access and experience for people needing care. I look forward to seeing great improvements to those services.

“The All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group has been actively involved in designing the new pathway and will continue to be involved in all future work. I want to thank them for the work to date and for their continued commitment and engagement in developing an improved service to meet the needs of transgender people in Wales.”

As part of the new arrangements, the foundations of a new interim care pathway will be put in place by the autumn. The interim pathway has been endorsed by the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group, which includes representatives from the transgender community and service users.

Under the new model, a multidisciplinary service, known as the Welsh Gender Team (WGT), will provide support to a network of general practitioners (GP's) across Wales with a specialist interest in all areas of gender care, including hormone replacement therapy and will accept direct referrals from GP's. The service will initially facilitate the prescribing of medication for individuals who have already attended appointments at the Gender Identity

Clinic (GIC) in London.

From the end of March next year, the WGT will accept new referrals and repatriate appropriate individuals who are currently on waiting lists for treatment. This will be done in partnership with the GIC, where the pathways will remain open for individuals with complex needs or those requesting gender reassignment surgery. Those who would prefer to continue their treatment with their current provider will be able to do so.

The new arrangements will result in shorter distances to travel, improved waiting times and better user experience. It will also ensure current clinic capacity is freed up for those requiring more specialised services, as well as shortening the steps between initial referral and beginning treatment.

In parallel with the implementation of the new service, the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group will take the remainder of the recommendations forward to build on the interim service and develop a full gender identity service and referral pathway.

Jack Jackson, from north Wales, who is a member of the All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group said:

“I’m delighted to be able to be part of the process and hope I can make some contribution and improve things for the future of transgender services and people in Wales.”

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of the BMA Cymru Wales GP Committee said:

“GPC Wales is delighted to see how Welsh Government has taken a proactive approach to listening and addressing the holistic care needs that the transgender community has.

“We’re also pleased that this will involve GPs with specialist interest being a pivotal part of the proposed service, and all GPs involved in the patient journey, with clarity on referral pathways being a first for the UK.”

[Wales has bin recycling even more](#)

[Provisional data for the 12 months ending March 2017](#), released today, shows:

- The reuse/recycling/composting rate increased to 64 per cent, compared with 60 per cent for the 12 months to the end of March 2016.
- The total amount of municipal waste generated in Wales in January –

March 2017 decreased with the tonnage falling by 6 per cent, from 400 to 375 thousand tonnes, compared to the same quarter of 2016.

- The residual household waste generated per person decreased by 4 per cent, falling to 48 kilograms per person in January to March 2017, compared with the same quarter of 2016

The Welsh Government has set statutory targets of recycling 58 per cent by 2016-17, 64 per cent by 2019-20 and 70 per cent of waste by 2024-25. The latest data shows all but one local authority met the current 2016-17 target. Although Blaenau Gwent just missed the 58% target, its 57% rate was an increase on the 49% seen a year earlier.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths welcomed the publication of the data. She said:

“These latest recycling figures make for extremely satisfying reading. They reveal the waste we are generating is decreasing while the amount we recycle continues to rise.

“We should be extremely proud of our recycling performance here in Wales. This is an area where we lead the way in the UK and indeed just two countries in the whole world recycle now more than we do.

“We are always looking at how we can continue to improve. Only last week I announced I intend to consult on plans to halve food waste by 2025. I am confident this is achievable thanks to the continued efforts of Local Authorities and householders’ commitment to recycling. Today’s figures prove they clearly share our ambition for Wales to become a zero waste nation by 2050”.

[GCSE pupils congratulated by Kirsty Williams](#)

This year, for the first time, pupils are receiving their results for new ‘made in Wales’ English Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics GCSEs which are unique to Wales.

This year’s results show:

- 62.8% of all learners, including early entry candidates, achieving A*-C grades.
- For 16 year olds only the figure rises to 66.7%.

- Results at A* have remained stable.
- There have been improvements in the summer results at A*-C in large entry subjects such as English Literature, History, Geography, and Welsh 2nd Language.

This year has seen a significant increase in the number of students entered before they have completed their full programme of study. A number of students who were entered early, either last summer or in November, have not returned to sit the exam again in the summer.

As a result, independent regulator Qualifications Wales have stated that “reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from direct comparisons between results in summer 2017 and summer 2016, or the comparison between summer results across the UK.”

Visiting Cefn Saeson school in Neath, Kirsty Williams said:

“I would like to congratulate the thousands of pupils across Wales who are receiving their results today.

“These reformed qualifications are aimed at providing pupils with the right skills for the modern world. We can be proud of the way our pupils and teachers have handled the introduction of these new qualifications that are playing a vital role in raising standards.

“I am concerned about the high number of pupils being entered early for their exams. Many of these pupils, who are taking exams before they have completed their two years of GCSE study, have not had the opportunity to reach their full potential. This is putting unnecessary pressure on pupils, teachers and also puts an extra strain on school budgets. I will respond to Qualifications Wales’s rapid review of this issue when I receive it in October, but the current situation is unsustainable and all options are on the table.

“Our radical overhaul of our education system is about raising standards and the aspirations of our learners. As well as reforming GCSEs, we are introducing a new curriculum and new professional teaching and leadership standards to make sure our pupils have the skills they need to succeed in life.”

GCSEs in Wales are changing; six GCSE subjects have been reformed – English Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics. The summer 2017 exams reflect these new qualifications, while other GCSEs are due to change.

Minister highlights alternative career options as thousands collect their GCSE results

The Welsh Government supports apprenticeships from level 2 through to higher levels. Last week the Minister visited IT Pie in Penarth to speak with one of the company's apprentices, Jaimie Warburton, and Creative Director, Aran Pitter, to hear more about why apprenticeships work for them, from both a learner and business perspective.

Jaimie, now 28 and from Caerphilly, outlined that he always had an interest in IT and web development but after leaving school at 16 he initially struggled to find his vocation.

After working as an IT support officer at a variety of different businesses, Jaimie became despondent about his career and craved the opportunity to get his foot in the door of a web design company, however without any formal qualifications in web development or relevant work experience he struggled to secure a job.

He decided to go freelance for a short period of time in order to gain some experience and before long came across the opportunity to do a Level 4 apprenticeship in Front-End Web Development with IT Pie in Penarth.

He explained that the application process was very simple and he was lucky enough to be successful. Now twelve months on, thanks to IT Pie, Sgil Cymru and the Welsh Government, Jaimie is on the road to completing his apprenticeship and in the next few weeks he will become a fully-qualified web developer with a bright and prosperous future ahead of him.

Commenting on why an apprenticeship was the best route for him, Jaimie said:

"The course has been absolutely brilliant. I have received so much support and guidance from my colleagues who have taught me all the technical terms and language. It's been great to be able to apply everything I'm learning at college to real-life situations every day.

"I will finish my apprenticeship in September and become a fully-qualified web developer. I feel like my career is finally taking off.

"I'd definitely recommend doing an apprenticeship. I didn't even think they were available in things like web design. I thought you had to go to university to work in web development and coding, but that's not the case. It's been a brilliant way of gaining hands-on practical experience as well as all the relevant skills and qualifications. For me, an apprenticeship is a quicker way to get

straight into the job you want.”

Highlighting why apprenticeships work for IT Pie, Aran Pitter said: “In our line of work – web development and design – technologies are constantly evolving so it is vital we stay ahead of the curve and remain current. The skills and on the job training our apprentices learn are shaped by business needs which makes this type of learning and development relevant to the individual and our company.

“Jaimie is an asset to IT Pie and has really hit the ground running. Over the last ten years we have taken on a number of apprentices and apart from one all of them continued to work for us after qualifying.

“The great thing about taking on an apprentice is that you can take someone from ground level, mould their learning and development around the needs of the company and its clients and this not only supports business growth but it enables the apprentice to develop skills that are relevant to real-life.”

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, added:

“Jaimie is just one example of someone who has a thriving career after securing an apprenticeship. It highlights just how valuable it is to gain practical, on the job experience and how it can provide them with all the skills and qualifications they need to have a rewarding and fruitful career. ”

“Apprenticeships are the start of an exciting and rewarding career and can benefit anyone of any age, giving them an opportunity to gain practical, on the job experience while gaining all the skills and qualifications they need.

“Apprenticeships are a key investment for employers who can train their workforce in the specialist skills they need within their organisation. Overall, apprenticeships play an important role in increasing the nation’s overall skill set and driving economic growth, making sure that Wales remains competitive on the world stage.”

For more information about becoming an apprentice, visit careerswales.com and follow the apprenticeship link or to find out how your business could benefit from recruiting an apprentice, visit [Skills Gateway for Business](#), or call 03000 6 03000. Also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/apprenticeshipscymru and on Twitter @apprenticewales.

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