

Start ups in Wales benefit from over £15m of loans

Latest figures from the UK wide Start Up Loans Company (SULCO) show that since the fund was established in Wales in October 2013, it has provided support and loans to 1943 new and early stage Welsh businesses, with an average lending amount of around £8000 per company.

The figures mean that over the last four years an average of two new Welsh businesses a day have benefitted from funding from the Start Up Loan Company.

Speaking about the latest figures, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Government is committed to encouraging entrepreneurship and start ups across Wales. However we recognise that the one thing holding most entrepreneurs back is their difficulty in accessing affordable finance and the right mentoring support.

“We are proud to support the UK Wide Start Up Loans Company which is partly delivered by the Welsh Government Business Wales service.

“Since its inception in 2012 the Start Up Loans Company fund has supported nearly 2000 start ups in Wales and it is really heartening to see the ongoing success of companies such as organic hair treatment specialists, Goji Hair in Cardiff, outdoor activity company, Waterfall Ways in Glynneath and Bite Wales – the Little Cheese Shop in Denbighshire.

“Their stories show just what can be achieved when drive, ambition and flair are coupled with the right finance and support.”

Joanna Hill, Interim CEO at The Start Up Loans Company, said:

“Start-ups play an instrumental role in driving the growth of the

economy, and it's great to see such a demand for funding in Wales. The businesses we have helped launch span a range of sectors, and demonstrate the flair and diversity of the start-up community in Wales.

"We have helped fund over 2,000 start-ups in Wales since the scheme's inception and it has been rewarding watching them grow to become successful, profitable businesses. Working in partnership with the Business Wales service we anticipate this momentum to continue, and we look forward to seeing more businesses start-up and thrive across the country."

Schools summer scheme in good health

Earlier this year, the Education Secretary announced half million pounds to help fund Food and Fun clubs in selected schools during the school summer holidays.

The programme aims to enrich the school holiday experience of children in areas of high deprivation, and will see a number of schools providing free meals, as well as a wide range of food education, physical activity and other fun sessions during the summer break.

Staff and volunteers at Llandrindod school provide a club for children in the area for three days of the week during the holidays and the Education Secretary was quick to praise efforts.

Kirsty Williams said:

"It is a sad reality that for some of our young people the school summer holidays can be a difficult time. Children who benefit from free school breakfasts and lunches often miss meals and go hungry once their school closes for the holidays, while the lack of opportunities for socialising and team sports activities can have a detrimental impact on those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

"I have been really encouraged with what I have seen today and would congratulate those involved for the enriching experience on offer. While the scheme does offer a healthy free breakfast and lunch which tackle holiday hunger, I was especially pleased to see the fun and rewarding educational activities available which can also go a long way to improving learners' health and wellbeing."

New Chair appointed to Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse

Caroline Phipps has been appointed as Chair of the Panel from 14 August 2017 to 13 August 2018.

The Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse is an independent expert advisory Welsh Government Sponsored Body, established under general executive powers of the Welsh Ministers and supported by the Welsh Government. The Panel's remit is to advise on measures to prevent or reduce substance misuse, the associated health and social harms and review implementation of the Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Strategy.

The Panel will consist of not less than eight and not more than 12 Panel Members, all of whom are independent of the Welsh Government.

Members of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse (APoSM), including the Chair, are not paid, but are reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. They have a time commitment of approximately 10 days per annum.

Rebecca Evans said:

"We are committed to tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales. I am pleased that Caroline Phipps has agreed to take up the role of Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse for the next 12 months.

"I am confident Caroline's breadth of knowledge and expertise, along with the continued input from other Panel Members, will be invaluable."

More EU investment for growth and jobs in Port Talbot

The funding will support a full redevelopment of three hectares of brownfield land; the construction of a new access road and the upgrade of an existing road in what will become strategic employment site for the area.

The two-year project will prepare the site for business investment and the

development of more than 200,000 square feet of industrial and office space, which could accommodate around 1,600 jobs.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford, said:

“I’m pleased EU funding is again supporting a key infrastructure and economic growth project in Port Talbot.

“This is an exciting milestone in the redevelopment of the Harbourside area of Port Talbot, which will bring new business opportunities and jobs. The investment is great news for the area and provides another valuable boost to drive the local economy.”

The investment in the new development at Harbourside follows substantial EU funding in the regeneration of Port Talbot, including £54m for the Harbour Way M4 link road; £7.5m in TWI’s new engineering research centre and £2.5m in the town’s new transport hub.

Councillor Annette Wingrave, Neath Port Talbot Council’s cabinet member for regeneration and sustainable development said:

“This funding is fundamental in allowing the council to realise its regeneration aspirations for Harbourside and the surrounding area.

“It will enable us to transform this former docks area into one of the most important strategic employment sites in the region.

“Part of Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone, this further investment in Harbourside will deliver an even more compelling proposition for businesses and companies looking to invest here.

“We have made an excellent start with the new Court Services building and the R&D village at Harbourside Business Park but this will allow us to push on and take full advantage of the investment that has been made in Harbour Way, Port Talbot Parkway Station and the new transport hub.

“It will also support our regeneration work in Port Talbot town centre via the Welsh Government’s Vibrant and Viable Places programme, which is already transforming areas in the town. These are exciting times for the county borough.”

Flying A&E Service Lands in North Wales

The enhanced Service will be officially launched today at Caernarfon Airport by the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Vaughan Gething AM. Also at the launch will be Wales Air Ambulance (WAA) Chief Executive Angela Hughes, 'Welsh Flying Medics' interim National Director Dr Ami Jones, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) Chair Peter Higson, and BCUHB Deputy Chief Executive Dr Evan Moore.

In 2015, a unique Third Sector-Public Sector partnership was created between the WAA, Welsh Government and NHS Wales. This resulted in the creation of the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS Cymru), more commonly known as the 'Welsh Flying Medics', which provides pioneering pre-hospital critical and emergency medical care across Wales.

The Service, which effectively takes the emergency room to the patients, is made up of Welsh Government-funded NHS consultants and critical care practitioners who are able to deliver innovative emergency treatments usually not available outside the hospital environment.

The WAA raises £6.5 million every year from charitable donations to keep the helicopters flying.

Before the 'Welsh Flying Medics' service was introduced, all WAA helicopters were staffed by paramedics. The introduction of consultants and critical care practitioners means that the service is now able to conduct blood transfusions, administer anaesthetics, offer strong painkillers, and conduct a range of medical procedures – all at the scene of an incident.

Over the past two years, the 'Flying Medics' have become operational on the WAA helicopters based in Dafen and in Welshpool. The next phase has seen the Service start working from the Charity's base in Caernarfon. As well as the introduction of the medics, the Charity has also unveiled a newer, more advanced aircraft for North Wales.

In addition, the Service also has access to a fleet of Rapid Response Vehicles and an RRV will be based in Caernarfon along with the advanced helicopter. The medical equipment has been designed to be interchangeable between the Charity's helicopters and the RRVs.

As well as the original partners, this development is being supported by BCUHB and the Welsh Ambulance Service.

An independent evaluation by the Farr Institute at Swansea University has already started to reveal how the 'Welsh Flying Medics' service is having a positive impact on critical care in Wales.

Results indicate that:

- by taking the emergency room to the patient, the Service has shortened the time it takes for somebody who is critically ill to receive consultant-led treatment
- more people in Wales, in rural and urban areas, now have equal access to timely consultant-led treatment during an emergency incident, and can be immediately transported to specialist care at healthcare facilities across Wales and beyond
- the Service has relieved some pressure on frontline NHS emergency services. It has improved the time it takes for certain patients to be taken for a CT scan or emergency surgery. In addition, the Service has reduced timely and costly transfers between hospitals by taking patients directly to the appropriate specialist care
- the Service has supported the development of skills and knowledge in critical and emergency care for NHS Wales employees, both during emergency incidents and by organising regular training opportunities.

Evidence of long-term patient health benefits will be presented over the next few years; however, international evidence suggests that advanced critical and emergency care at the scene of an incident or at a peripheral hospital improves the chances, and speed, of patient recovery.

The Service has also supported the recruitment of emergency medicine and anaesthesia consultants into Wales, including BCUHB.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“I welcome this initiative that will enhance the existing service from Caernarfon and bring it in line with the rest of the EMRTS cover enjoyed elsewhere.

“It will bring access to critical care and emergency medicine much closer for people living in North Wales and ensure that they can get the best care more quickly.

“The new helicopter and rapid response vehicle available at the airbase will protect the existing WAA service and make the area more attractive to the very best clinicians and critical care practitioners. It will play a vital role in the provision of high quality unscheduled care across North Wales.”

Dr Ami Jones, EMRTS Cymru Interim National Director, said:

“Wales can pride itself on having established and consistent platinum-standard critical care across all of the country, via the WAA’s bases in North, Mid and South Wales. The Service is already supporting the work of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board but this next stage in our development can only enhance the benefits that we bring, not just in North Wales, but in Powys and parts of Ceredigion.”

Angela Hughes, Wales Air Ambulance Charity Chief Executive, said:

“The innovative equipment and treatments that we have introduced have attracted international attention, with many Helimed services across the world looking to adopt the Welsh model. Our heartfelt thanks go to the people of Wales for raising the £6.5m each year needed to keep the four helicopters flying. We are serving Wales and saving lives.”

Gary Doherty, BCUHB Chief Executive, said:

“We are delighted to support this development from the Wales Air Ambulance and EMRTS Cymru which will have a positive impact on critical care in North Wales.

“This specialist service will provide patients in remote and rural areas with rapid access to life saving care.

“We are pleased that this service has also helped the recruitment of emergency medicine and anaesthesia consultants into our hospitals as they were attracted by the opportunity to work for EMRTS Cymru.”