

£3m to improve access to technology for health staff and patients

Speaking at the Digital Health and Care Conference in Cardiff today, Vaughan Gething, said the money would form part of a new three year Digital Inclusion and Health programme which would help staff and patients engage with technology and support people to access and manage their medical information online.

“Having the skills and motivation to access digital health services can help people better manage their conditions, whilst helping to reduce the burden on under pressure NHS services,” he said.

“The National Survey for Wales 2017-18 showed that 60% of people in Wales aged 75 and over and 26% of disabled people are digitally excluded. These people are also more likely to access health and social care services than the rest of the population. It is vital we improve their ability to access digital services.”

The Leader of the House with responsibility for digital Julie James said:

“Improving digital literacy can have a significant impact on improving health outcomes for people by giving them more control to manage their own conditions and improve their wellbeing.

Developing the basic digital skills of citizens in Wales is a priority for this government and we know those more likely to access health and social care services are often those least likely to engage with technology.

Today’s announcement will see us go out to tender this Friday for a jointly funded £6million three-year digital inclusion and health programme, to begin in July 2019. This funding recognises the importance of digital inclusion to delivering digital transformation in health.”

Hard at work for our Armed Forces community

As we prepare to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War,

which cost the lives of more than 700,000 British soldiers, including thousands from Wales, events are being held across the country to mark this significant milestone.

Ahead of Armistice Sunday, when the Cabinet Secretary will attend the Welsh Government's National Service of Thanksgiving at Llandaff Cathedral, he today outlined some of the work currently ongoing to support our Service personnel and Veterans in Wales.

He also launched an Employment Pathway for Veterans and Service leavers, aimed at supporting them into employment, and funding for councils to implement long term support through dedicated liaison officers.

Alun Davies said:

"This time of the year serves as a poignant reminder of those who fought bravely in previous conflicts to preserve our way of life. We must never forget those who have paid the ultimate price, and those that survived with serious injuries, to protect the freedom we have today.

"We have made tremendous progress in Wales to deliver appropriate services and support for our Armed Forces community and today I am delighted to announce two new measures which I believe can help many more.

"Employment is clearly pivotal to a successful transition, and the health and wellbeing of Veterans and Service leavers. That's why we have been working hard with our partners including the Armed Forces Expert Group to develop an Employment Pathway. To complement the Pathway, we are also working with 'Business in The Community' to develop an Employers' Toolkit, which will help them recognise the qualities ex-Service personnel can offer prospective employers.

"Last year, the WLGA was successful in obtaining Covenant Funding to appoint Armed Forces Liaison Officers, to deliver consistent support for veterans and their families in local authorities across Wales. I have been carefully following the valuable work they are doing, including the Construction Insight Day, which provided Service leavers and Veterans with an opportunity to meet employers in the construction and civil engineering sector to give them an overview of opportunities within these areas of employment.

"This funding will come to an end in 2019. To continue this momentum, and build on the good work already being undertaken, I am allocating half a million pounds from next year to enable Covenant Guidelines and services be fully embedded by councils over the next two years.

"We will continue to work collaboratively with our key partners to make a difference for our Armed Forces community."

Lesley Griffiths announces consultation into banning third party sales of puppies

Speaking at the RSPCA Cymru Gala Dinner at the Pierhead on Monday night (5 November), Lesley Griffiths said the Welsh Government was committed to improving welfare standards for puppies.

The consultation will look to gather evidence on what stage the government should intervene in large scale breeding premises and address concerns about animal welfare.

It comes after the Cabinet Secretary vowed to look into banning the third party sales of puppies earlier this year.

Lesley Griffiths said:

“Wales has led the way in animal welfare legislation and we’re determined to keep raising standards of responsible animal ownership.

“I know there are growing concerns about the welfare standards at some large scale breeding premises and I have asked my officials to investigate how a ban on third party sales could address these concerns.

“Information on the supply chain of puppies is of particular significance in this process. At what point in this chain will Government intervention have the biggest impact? The beginning or the end? Or both? It is absolutely essential we address the root cause of any welfare concerns in changes to legislation and I will launch a consultation early in the New Year.”

Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths hopes fishing industry ‘takes the

bait' for International Year of the Salmon to boost conservation efforts

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) has launched the initiative in a bid to raise awareness of the climate change challenges salmon faces and showcase the benefits it has to the rural economy.

The outreach campaign is being launched with an England and Wales webpage, www.yearofthesalmon.org, hosted by the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS).

The webpage will contain all relevant England and Wales salmon information and be updated with events for the wider public to engage with.

Wild Atlantic salmon are one of England and Wales most iconic species, and a vital indicator of healthy aquatic environments, but the fish are in a perilous state in their marine and freshwater environments.

This is because they face many challenges and uncertainties associated with climate change and human activities.

The International Year of the Salmon 2019 aims to engage the public, political representatives and the science community with a view to highlighting these issues.

Fisheries on rivers for salmon and sea trout also provide significant economic and cultural importance to the rural economy in Wales, with angling generating over £150 million for the Welsh economy each year.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said:

“I wholeheartedly back the International Year of the Salmon and hope the fishing industry ‘takes the bait’ in efforts to boost its conservation and restoration.

“Angling, whether it is done on an industrial scale or for recreation through licensing for local clubs, is a key part of our rural economy.

“It is important those in the industry give their full backing to this campaign, so we can protect the sustainability of salmon fishing in Wales and further boost the Welsh economy.”

Welsh retail – use it or lose it says Economy Secretary

Kicking off towards the end of what has been a challenging year for UK retail, the new campaign is a joint venture between the Welsh Government and the Welsh Retail Consortium, and is intended to challenge growing misconceptions around the future of the sector.

Despite current industry challenges, retail remains Wales' largest private employer with nearly 12,000 shops providing more than 130,000 jobs. And shops exist in nearly every community in Wales, providing a vital service for local people and visitors and often ensuring an important social outlet and meeting place.

One element of the new campaign centres around the fact that retail is a dynamic industry and one that is transforming at a rapid pace to meet consumer needs. Coupled with the fact that it offers flexible working hours and good pay rates, which grew on average by 7% last year, the campaign promotes retail as an excellent career choice and one that often offers good progression opportunities.

The other element of the campaign focuses on the community benefits of the sector, with retailers across Wales driving local economic growth, investing in the communities in which they are located and providing a vital back drop for social interactions.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said;

“I am proud to be part of this campaign which celebrates and promotes the good work of our retail sector. Shops of all shapes and sizes play an important part in our daily lives, but with changes to the way people shop and increased competition, there is no doubt that this a tough time for the sector.

“The stark reality is that if we don't celebrate the sector and ensure we make good use of it, we are in danger of losing crucial parts of it.

“My Economic Action Plan recognises the importance of retail and identifies it as one of our four Foundation Sectors. This means we are working across Government to increase the sustainability of the sector and to improve its image and how it is perceived. We are also working to maximise the impact that retail has within our communities and regions.

“This new campaign which celebrates the contribution of retail to our economy, our communities and as a career provider fully supports these ambitions , and I hope it will help to ensure a thriving future for the sector.”

Head of Welsh Retail Consortium, Sara Jones said:

“Welsh retail is an exciting, dynamic and diverse industry undergoing profound transition. A thriving retail sector is a great route to better paid jobs, more private sector investment, sharper prices for consumers, and a key route to market for producers.

“Here in Wales it is a key social and economic contributor and is the largest private sector employer, providing employment and services in communities right across the country. Members of the Welsh Retail Consortium are working hard to offer rewarding careers and have committed to work towards roles that offer greater flexibility, are well-remunerated and have clear progression routes for colleagues.

“This campaign offers the opportunity to showcase those opportunities as well as the important role that retail plays in our everyday life.”