

# Welsh students invited to apply now for student finance

The easiest way to apply is online at [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk) and students should do so as soon as possible to ensure their funding is in place before the start of term.

Students in Wales can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to pay for tuition fees and a Maintenance Loan to help with living costs. They can also apply for a Welsh Government Learning Grant which doesn't need to be paid back. Find out more about what is available on the [2020 to 2021 summary page](#).

Last year 46,000 applications were received within the first three months of the service opening, with 14,000 being submitted within the first month.

Derek Ross, SLC Executive Director of Operations, said: "The launch of the application service is one of the biggest dates in the student finance calendar. It means that students can get on with the important job of getting their student finances sorted.

"The application takes 30 minutes to complete online and for most students the process will be straightforward. However, we know that some individuals require extra support and our team of expert staff are ready to help them."

SLC has compiled the following 'top tips' to help students with different circumstances get their student finances sorted in plenty of time for the new academic year.

## **All students should:**

Apply as early as possible to make sure your funding is in place before your course starts. The deadline to apply is 15 May 2020 for new students and 12 June 2020 for returning students. If you don't have a confirmed place on a course you can still apply now, just give us the details of your first choice and you can update the application later if required.

- Keep contact details up-to-date

Make sure you have provided us with an up-to-date e-mail address so we can contact you about your application if we need to.

- Have important documents at hand

Have your National Insurance number and passport details to hand before you start your application as you will be asked for this information when you apply.

## **If you have studied before**

- If you have studied before it could affect your eligibility – even if

your previous course was self-funded. Make sure to submit your application early so your entitlement can be confirmed. [Find out more about previous study.](#)

## **If you're not from the UK**

- Check out [Student Finance Wales](#) for more information about eligibility.
- You may be asked to provide evidence of your ID and residency history. It's important that you send this as quickly as possible so that we can process your application and confirm that you are entitled to funding.

For more information visit the [Student Finance Wales](#) website and watch the [Student Finance Explained video](#). You can also follow Student Finance Wales on Facebook and Twitter to keep up with all the latest news and information.

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## **DBS Disclosure Process Video**

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has launched a video that explains the process for a standard and enhanced DBS check. The video includes a brief summary of the work we do at DBS and then focuses on how standard and enhanced certificates are produced, and the various stages each application has to go through.

The video can be found [here](#).

In 2018, Ipsos Mori conducted some research on our behalf, to understand the customer and stakeholder perception of DBS through a Customer Satisfaction Survey. The survey focused on DBS check applicants, Registered Bodies and HR professionals.

Survey results showed there was a lack of understanding in how a DBS certificate is produced, with six in ten customers advising they weren't aware of how their application was processed. The results also highlighted a lack of understanding around Registered Bodies, and the role they play in the application process.

The video we've launched aims to present the application process in a more user-friendly way, so customers understand how to apply, what happens to their application once they've submitted it and the role that DBS, Registered Bodies and law enforcement agencies play in the process.

The video is available in two formats, the first of which is a full-length video and can be found above. The video has also been broken down into five smaller videos, each covering a different section of the process – these

shorter versions can be found on our YouTube channel [here](#).

If you'd like to provide any feedback on the video, please contact us [here](#).

More information about the subjects mentioned in the video can be found below:

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## **UN Human Rights Council 43: UK statement for the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan**

Thank you Madam President,

The United Kingdom thanks the Commission for its important work and detailed report and welcomes South Sudan's cooperation with the Commission on this critical agenda.

We note with concern the rise in deaths linked to localised conflict and displacement at the sub-national level, continued forced recruitment by Government and opposition forces, and ongoing sexual and gender-based violence.

We welcome the formation of the transitional government. Movement into the next phase of peace provides an opportunity to progress human rights. The Commission's work and the mandate renewal is vital to address impunity for violations and abuses and is essential to maintaining progress during transition.

We urge the Government of South Sudan to engage fully with this Council, and other mechanisms, to ensure the progress made in the peace process delivers change. This means open and honest dialogue with organisations and individuals that support human rights inside and outside South Sudan.

The Government of South Sudan has made some positive progress. Further action is now needed to deliver sustainable peace, justice and accountability. That starts with an honest assessment of the challenges faced. In this regard, we seek consensus support for mandate renewal of the Commission.

We would like to ask the Commission what specific action the new Unity Government could immediately take to end restrictions on civic space and protect freedom of expression?

Thank you.

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# Housing Minister's speech to the Planning Inspectorate

Good morning and thank you very much for that warm introduction. It's a real pleasure for me to join you this morning for your annual training event, following on from where Kit Malthouse left off in 2019. But don't worry, I'm not going to make any jokes about eels or bears. The only bears around here are the Bristol Bears, who play in this stadium.

What I see before me are dedicated, hard-working professionals. What you see of course, is yet another new minister.

Seeing new ministers is nothing new for planners. You've been seeing ministers since 1909. John Burns was the first Local Government Board Minister to address the equivalent then of the Planning Inspectorate, and he appointed a man named John Adams as the Chief Planner.

John Adams had the sort of challenges that you face. He was the Chief Planner at the time of the 1919 Housing Act – the Addison Act – which built the 'Homes for Heroes' after the First World War. He was very keen on garden suburbs. He was keen on gentle density. He wanted to build good urban homes. The sort of things that you see today and are the challenges that we face today.

You see nothing new except for this new minister.

Kit, my predecessor, was in his job for 6 months when he came to speak to you last year. I've been in my job for just under 3 weeks, so you are probably thinking to yourselves, "what on earth can he know about planning?"

But what I do know is a bit about bad design. I live in a house which is very hot in the summer, very cold in the winter, the roof leaks like a sieve, and when I wanted to put a gas cooker into my kitchen at the back of the house the whole of the front of the house had to be dug up to put the piping in. Now, I can't blame the developer and the planner for my house as it's about 200 years old. But I know a bit about what bad design can mean for households and homeowners.

And I know about infrastructure as well, and the importance of it. My town, Tamworth, is more or less built out, and to put new development for the people that want to live in or near to Tamworth, you have got to put it on the edge of Tamworth, in Litchfield District. And that requires putting in really good infrastructure to ensure that people can get into Tamworth. To ensure that people have got the schools and GP surgeries and hospitals they need as the town grows.

And I know a bit about the horrors of adoption. I've got constituents who

come to me to complain about living on what they feel to be a building site for 5 years. Where they've got to don pitons and crampons to get up the curb, because they are so very, very deep, and because their estates aren't completed.

And I know a lot about the need for new and better homes. Because in my part of the world, houses for purchase and rent are appreciatively more expensive than in other parts of the West Midlands as we simply do not have enough homes. There isn't a week that goes by without my constituents contacting me saying, "Chris, we just aren't able to buy or to rent the homes that we want to live in in this beautiful part of the world."

So, I know a bit about those things and that's why we need to build more homes. We built 241,000 last year; we need to build a million by the end of this Parliament; and by the middle of this decade we need to be building 300,000 homes every year. And that means all of us need to work harder.

But I'm very conscious about how hard you all work. 24,000 cases last year. 18,000 planning decision executed. That's a staggering volume. And out of that you've managed to drive up your volume, which means you've driven down the average time for written representations to be concluded to 19 weeks. That's 10 weeks quicker than a year ago. And despite the volume, and despite the speed, your quality has not gone down.

In fact, I think it's as good or it's even getting better. And I'll give you a case in point of the quality decisions that you are making. There's a new housing development in Hertfordshire called PegasusLife. It was turned down by the planning authority. But on appeal the inspector approved that development because of the quality of its architectural design. It was subsequently shortlisted for a Housing Design Award and won the Inside Housing 2019 award for Best Older People's Housing Development.

And we need more housing for older people. We talk a lot about building homes for first time buyers, but in fact, and I'm getting this statistic checked out because I want to make sure it's accurate, I've heard that for 2 in every 3 elderly people that move into a properly constructed retirement home, then just a few rungs down the chain a home becomes available for a first time buyer.

So, it isn't just important to build new homes. It's important to build homes for first time buyers and it's important to build homes for people who are older so that we get the chain moving. And your decision in that particular instance meant that some really good homes for elderly people were built.

I was just talking to the guys when I arrived, and in those 18,000 applications that you dealt with last year, less than 1% were successfully challenged in the courts. For the 9th consecutive year you are scoring really well. You are certainly getting more wins than many other parts of government in the courts, so perhaps we can use you in other ways too.

So, I want to thank you for the hard work that you are undertaking, but I want to encourage you to work even harder, because we have a real job to do

to get those new homes built.

And it's the government's responsibility – it's my responsibility – to help you. We're trying to speed up the planning system and make it more efficient and agile. In 2010 only 17% of local authorities had local plans in place. Now 90% of local authorities have plans. There's something like 2,600 groups involved with the neighbourhood planning process. We've injected £22 million into the Planning Delivery Fund to help local councils digitise their services and improve design so that fewer applications end up on your desk at appeal.

But I'm conscious that we need to do more. You'll hear more today about the National Model Design Code, and you already know about the National Design Guide. These are tools which are gold standard and will encourage aesthetically pleasing designs which conform with the local environment.

Because it's only by putting people at the heart of the planning process, and communities which want development around them and respect it around them, that we can make sure more planning decisions go through quickly without the need for appeal.

So, I want to thank you again for all that you do. I want to thank you for what you will continue to do. I want you to be good gatekeepers to the planning system. Keep the gates open for good quality building and for good design.

And in planning and housebuilding there is no bear market. We need and want a bull market that is going up, where more homes are being built. So please, when you go to work, do not be bears, be bulls.

Thank you very much and enjoy your training event.

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## **UK statement in response to OSCE Head of Mission visit to Montenegro**

Thank you Mr Chair

The UK welcomes Ambassador Daviet to the Permanent Council. And we thank you for your Report on the Mission's activities over the last twelve months.

We support the EU statement.

The UK appreciates the activities undertaken by the Mission across a range of areas, including support for the election process, gender mainstreaming, reconciliation, media, small arms and light weapons, and transnational threats. Let me focus on these areas.

With parliamentary elections taking place later this year, early steps that take into account ODIHR's previous recommendations will be important. We appreciate that you are already providing international expertise to the State Election Commission, including on access to polling stations, enhanced voter education and taking into account a gender perspective.

We appreciate your work on youth engagement. Youth plays an important role in reconciliation. And we welcome your work to facilitate youth exchanges, including through the provision of training to secondary schools, civil society organisations and RYCO grantees. This is a valuable contribution of the Mission.

Media and safety of journalists continue to remain areas of focus. In particular we welcome the activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in providing advice and expertise on the draft media laws. We look forward to the government presenting the new laws on the media to parliament for discussion. We welcome OSCE engagement on these areas, including to strengthen media literacy among journalists and communication professionals. It is essential to ensure an independent and pluralistic media, and a climate where journalists can carry out their work without threats and without violence.

We welcome your work on gender mainstreaming. Agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Finance to pilot a gender-responsive approach to budgeting, and the development of local action plans to mainstream gender into structures, processes, policies and budgets, are positive results.

As 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we welcome your engagement with international partners to support implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Action Plan in Montenegro.

We are concerned by the substantial number of small arms and light weapons in the country, and note the activity to reduce and control SALW in 2019. We recognise that you have been supporting implementation of the roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW in the Western Balkans by 2024. But that more needs to be done, particularly in reducing the number in citizens' possession. And to strengthen mechanisms to prevent them falling into the wrong hands.

We also appreciate the Mission's work on transnational threats. As Chair of the Security Committee, I hope there is an opportunity to demonstrate the work of your Field Mission in the Committee.

Thank you