

Welsh Government and GPC Wales agree changes to the GP contract for 2017/18

As a result of the agreed changes to the contract investment in general medical service will increase by approximately £27m.

This investment includes an uplift of 2.7% for GP pay and expenses for 2017/18 which covers:

- a pay increase of 1%;
- a general expenses uplift of 1.4% to cover practice costs;
- a contribution towards the rising costs of professional indemnity;
- a contribution towards the increased costs of the pensions administration ;
- an increase in funding for maternity, parental leave and sickness absence;
- a contribution towards the business improvement levy.

The investment also includes provision for new enhanced services covering care homes; warfarin management , diabetes and the delivery of secondary care initiated phlebotomy test. GP practices will provide;

- an enhanced service to all 22,700 nursing and residential care home residents in Wales, aimed at reducing variations in care;
- a new Diabetes Local Enhanced Service will be offered by all GP practices providing a more comprehensive package of care to patients across Wales;
- all GPs in Wales will offer a new Warfarin management service., meeting NICE guidelines ensuring the service is carried out in the practice where other health issues and prescribing changes are discussed;
- resources to recognise the workload associated with undertaking phlebotomy requests generated from outside the practice.

GPC Wales, Welsh Government and NHS Wales have also agreed to work in close collaboration in 2017/18 to modernise the contract to better meet the needs of the public and GPs. This includes:

- improving access to services;
- reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and improving ways in which the quality of care is monitored;
- addressing the rising costs of GP professional indemnity.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, our collaborative approach to the challenge of providing high-quality healthcare sets us apart.

“We have worked closely with our GP colleagues to create solutions that deliver the best care for patients. I’m confident that this approach of working in partnership is the right one, as we continue to transform primary care in Wales. It provides a strong platform for GPs to continue to provide high quality, sustainable, healthcare”

Chair of GPC Wales, Dr Charlotte Jones said:

“GPC Wales welcomes the collaborative approach taken by Welsh Government to help address the challenges facing GPs in Wales. I am certain that this approach will deliver the best outcomes for GPs and patients alike.

“The contract changes announced today will be part of a longer piece of work to review the entire contract and make it fit for the future.

“GPC Wales is looking forward to engaging in ongoing collaborative discussions over the months ahead.

“Additionally, we welcome the ongoing investment into clusters, the recently announced £40m for premises development, and the £95m for training healthcare professionals that will support primary care. These funds go hand in hand with today’s announcement, with the ultimate aim of strengthening primary care.”

Press release: Northern Ireland Assembly election

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

This election has demonstrated the clear desire by the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland for inclusive devolved government. I congratulate all of those who have been elected.

Everyone now has a shared responsibility to engage intensively in the short period of time that is available to us, to ensure that a strong and stable administration is established.

Northern Ireland has made great strides forward over the past two decades. All of us must continue the work of building a stable, peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland that works for everyone, based on the strong foundations of the Belfast Agreement and its successors.

It is with this positive intent that the UK Government approaches the days ahead. I will be speaking to party leaders during the course of today and remaining in contact with the Irish Government.

Welsh teachers return from CERN to teach what matters

Last month 24 physics teachers from all over Wales visited the site of the large hadron collider in Geneva to learn more about the latest discoveries in particle physics, as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The CERN teacher placement scheme, organised by Welsh Government, supported by the National STEM Learning Centre in York and funded by Project ENTHUSE and Dr Lyn Evans, provides teachers the opportunity to attend lectures and learn about CERN's facilities, functions and operation from the scientists and engineers who work there. Dr Evans from Aberdare, is the former Director of the Large Hadron Collider project, and acts as course co-ordinator for the four-day visit.

Dr Evans said,

“Our teachers are our greatest asset and deserve all the support we can give them. At CERN they experience a vibrant atmosphere and interact with front-line scientists. I hope that they can take their enthusiasm back to the classroom and inspire more budding young scientists, engineers and technicians, which are needed for Wales to compete in the 21st century high-tech world.”

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams said,

“Opportunities like this are vital if our teaching workforce is to better understand and communicate the application of real world science and technology. I want to ensure that our teaching workforce is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to guide our young people's learning in STEM subjects.

“Last month I announced the creation of a National Network for Excellence in Science and Technology (NNEST). The Science Network will be critical to supporting teachers of science and technology for those aged 3 to 18 through ready access to global developments in teaching and learning. I expect the network to consider closely the type of professional development offered by CERN, how that can be best communicated to teachers and expand such opportunities in the fields of chemistry, biology and engineering in the future.”

Chris Allton, professor of Theoretical Physics at Swansea University, said,

“To witness cutting-edge science first hand and to be able to bring this experience to life back in the classroom will prove inspirational for our pupils. We are proud that we can showcase antimatter research done by Swansea physicists to the visiting teachers while they are in CERN. The feedback we have received from the group is that the knowledge and experience gained from this trip should make teaching of physics much more enjoyable and meaningful for the students.”

Simon Ealey-Fitzgerald, Curriculum Area Leader for Science at Llanidloes High, who attended this year said,

“The event was inspiring and enthusing (at times confusing!), and the wealth of subject knowledge of the CERN participants, along with the pedagogical knowledge and insight of our teachers is to be celebrated. This really was a chance for Welsh teachers to share ideas and strategies for the ultimate benefit of our pupils.”

The programme has been organised and designed by our own STEM team and CERN Teacher Programme co-ordinator Jeff Weiner to ensure the teachers have the opportunity to appreciate CERN and the work undertaken there; by attending lectures on Particle Physics, the development of particle accelerators, particle detectors, visiting the Large Hadron Collider, the Magnet test facility, the Compact Muon Solenoid detector and finally a visit to the Antimatter Factory.

Later this year, and for the first time, teachers will be able to attend a two week summer placement at CERN; the first time a residential stay has been offered to all school science teachers (not just physics).

Teachers who wish to apply should contact the team at Dysg@wales.gsi.gov.uk

If the Tories continue to ignore the big issues then British consumers will continue to be short-changed – Gill Furniss

Gill Furniss MP, Labour's

Shadow Minister for Steel, Postal Services and Consumer

Protection, responding to news that the Chancellor will unveil details of the Government's

upcoming Consumer Green Paper in the Budget, including action on subscription traps and simplifying small print said:

"The data from Citizens

Advice makes clear that misleading consumer practices are extremely widespread,

with over 40 per cent of British people paying for a subscription they don't use.

"Consumers need much

better protection from stealthy subscriptions which often start automatically after a free trial. Clear notifications that billing or price changes are about

to begin should be the minimum that consumers can expect. At present, companies

have no incentive to improve, so allowing enforcement bodies to impose fines is

a positive step.

"While these changes are

welcome, the Tories with their light-touch approach have an abysmal track record on protecting consumers. Only last summer they sat back and watched Ofgem and the Competitions and Markets Authority effectively blame consumers for allowing energy companies to rip them off to the tune of £1.4 billion a year.

And to the surprise of no one, energy bills have just been hiked yet again. Labour would implement a price cap to properly protect consumers.

"These are sensible

proposals, but if the Tories continue to ignore the big issues then British consumers will continue to be short-changed. It's about time this government started taking its responsibility to UK consumers seriously."

News story: Foreign Secretary to visit Russia

The Foreign Secretary has accepted an invitation from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to visit Moscow in the coming weeks.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made clear that our policy towards Russia is to 'engage but beware' and the visit is entirely consistent with this approach.

Discussions will focus on the UK-Russia relationship and current international issues including Syria and Ukraine, where we continue to have significant differences. This is not a return to business as usual and the Foreign Secretary will continue to be robust on those issues where we differ.

We have always been clear that the UK will engage with Russia where it is in our national interest to do so.

Details of precise timings will be confirmed in due course. A potential visit has been in the pipeline for some time, with the Prime Minister and President Putin discussing this when they met in China in September 2016.