

£12m to boost employability

Communities for Work Plus is aimed at helping people like Jordan who was already a participant on Communities for Work, the sister programme of Communities for Work Plus when a series of seizures left him in a coma for four weeks. Jordan was training for a career in the construction industry and while he has made a remarkable recovery due to his determination and his commitment to his rehabilitation, he has not recovered enough to cope with physical demands of working on a construction site.

The Communities for Work team, therefore, supported him through a Level 2 Business Administration course, which he completed just six weeks after leaving hospital. This, combined with his previous construction training and experience, was enough for him to secure a job as an administration assistant with ITS Construction in the company's newly opened Swansea office.

The Minister launched the scheme, which will provide intensive mentoring and support to address the complex barriers to employment whilst visiting Seion Newydd in Morrison, where Swansea Council's Communities for Work Plus team were holding a community drop in session.

Communities for Work Plus contributes to the Welsh Government's Employability Plan which aims to eliminate the gap in working age unemployment and economic inactivity rates between Wales and the UK average within ten years; reduce the number of people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training; (NEET); increase the number of disabled people in work; and eliminate the qualification gap between Wales and the rest of the UK.

The Minister said:

"Sustainable employment is the best route out of poverty. The employability plan, which I launched earlier this year, recognises that some people experience barriers which prevent them entering work and advocates an individualised approach to helping those furthest from the jobs market into work.

"Communities for Work Plus is a perfect example of this approach, supporting people to undertake further training or providing practical help and advice to people to support people in achieving their aspirations. The programme will build on the success of other similar programmes which have already demonstrated that this approach works so I am delighted to be officially launching it today and look forward to seeing it help many more people to find work."

New programme to improve the lives of people with a learning disability in Wales

The way services are delivered for people with a learning disability in Wales is to be transformed to ensure they have what they need to lead successful lives, Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies has announced today.

Around 1.5 million people have a learning disability in the UK; some have a mild, moderate or severe learning disability which remains throughout their lives. There are approximately 15,000 adults with a learning disability are known to social services in Wales, with potentially at least a further 60,000 people not known to social services.

In 2017, the Welsh Government established the Learning Disability – Improving Lives Programme to better understand whether people with a learning disability have what they need to lead successful lives. It considered what a person and their families and carers may require across their life course and how these needs are currently being met.

Last week, the Welsh Government published A Healthier Wales, its long term plan for health and social care. This provides a blueprint to build and strengthen services for people with a learning disability and their families and carers, ensuring the seamless delivery of services focused around the needs of the individual and encouraging good practice to be shared consistently across Wales.

The Improving Lives Programme will focus on improving services in five key areas:

- early Years – reducing adverse childhood experiences and improving the ability of parents with a learning disability to bring up their children
- housing – new models of supported housing will be developed, helping people to live closer to their friends and families
- social care – making sure everyone who needs it has a access to good quality care and support which is focused on their needs
- health – through reasonable adjustments to mainstream services and access to specialist services when needed. To address health inequalities, making sure people with a learning disability receive the annual health checks they are entitled to and health boards ensure they meet the needs of people with a learning disability when in hospital
- education, skills and employment – supporting young people to make the most of their potential, and when they become adults ensuring they have the right support to allow them to live successful lives, through providing targeted careers advice and making sure more people with a learning disability have paid jobs.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“In the Welsh Government’s Strategy, Prosperity for All, we’ve challenged ourselves to look at the services we provide to ensure they support everyone to live a healthy, prosperous and rewarding life.

“Over the last year, we’ve met more than 2,000 people with learning disabilities, their families and carers to better understand whether they have what they need to lead successful lives. The response from parents and carers shows we have some work to do before we can be that sure all services are person-centred and flexible enough to meet people’s needs.

“The Improving Lives Programme I’m announcing today will put people and their families at the centre of our services, and give them a say in the services they receive. We will ensure services are seamless and work together, which will hopefully benefit everyone, whilst ensuring those who need additional support experience a level of equality when accessing services.”

To support the implementation of the programme, the Minister has established a Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, whose membership includes people with a learning disability and families and carers key and key professionals from local authorities, the health sector and charities.

The group will be chaired by Mrs Gwenda Thomas, the former Assembly Member for Neath and Deputy Minister for Social Services in the Welsh Government between 2007 and 2014. Ms Sophie Hinksman, a representative of All Wales People First will continue in her role as to Co-Chair.

[Welsh Government supports Boots Hearingcare’s Growth Plans in Llandudno](#)

Boots Hearingcare, and its predecessor David Ormerod Hearing Centres Ltd have been at the site in Llandudno since 2012, when there were just over 20 employees working at the Support Office.

Six years on and following Welsh Government funding there are now 90 people working in the offices, supporting a network of 500 Boots Hearingcare centres across the UK.

The Support Office is very much at the centre of the Boots Hearingcare business, and is a valued source of employment in the local area. The

refurbished offices, which have been transformed by local companies, now not only have additional desk space that allows the business to recruit more people from the region, but also provide an even better working environment and employee experience for existing colleagues.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

I am delighted that Welsh Government support has helped to expand the Boots Hearingcare offices in Llandudno, maintaining their presence in the town centre and helping to protect and create jobs.

Our support for Boots Hearingcare is absolutely in line with our Economic Action Plan which seeks to support the development and adoption of new technologies and spread the fruits of economic prosperity much more evenly across Wales.

I wish the company and the workers every success in its improved and expanded home.

Rob Skedge, Managing Director of Boots Hearingcare, said:

The investment from the Welsh Government not only shows their commitment to supporting local business, but also helping it grow. We are delighted to be able to further expand our team at the Boots Hearingcare Support Office and look forward to our future here in Llandudno.

Guests at the event were given the opportunity to find out more about the renovations work by taking a tour of the refurbished offices. They were also invited to hear from workers at Boots Hearingcare Support Office about how the changes have had a positive impact on their working experience.

During the ceremony, Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Transport, National Assembly Government, unveiled a plaque to commemorate the official reopening of the Support Office.

[Global centre of rail excellence to come to Wales](#)

After also attracting CAF here to build our first modern train manufacturing facility, the Welsh Government is responding to the clear demands of major rail companies to establish an integrated 'Global Centre of Rail Excellence'.

It would offer a bespoke innovation accelerator, rolling stock and infrastructure testing, storage, decommissioning, maintenance and servicing asset to the industry and the wider supply-chain.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Last year, Welsh Government and CAF announced the first modern train manufacturing facility to be built here. The factory is nearing completion, and trains for use in Wales will soon be built there.

“Earlier this month I announced details of the new, transformative, low carbon Wales and Borders rail service.

“From a standing start a few years ago, Wales is now developing as a home for our domestic rail industry. There is more we can do. I want our country recognised across the UK and Europe as a major hub. Our Economic Action Plan signalled a new approach to creating opportunities for developing our economy. I’m now signalling the next chapter of implementation of that plan.”

A number of potential sites for the centre are still being researched, but one is coming out as the preferred option – the mothballed open cast mine in Nant Helen, on the Powys and Neath Port Talbot border, and the adjacent and operational coal-washery site in Onllwyn.

Ken Skates added:

“This area, at the top of the Dulais Valley, has been reliant on the coal industry for generations. With this era drawing to a close, there is great potential for investment drawing on existing and new skills.

“This is also a project that could make an important contribution to the work of the Valleys Taskforce, providing good quality jobs and the skills to do them.

“I have therefore instructed Welsh Government officials to move to the next stage of business case development, which will involve continued and close partnership working. We estimate a bespoke facility like this will cost £100m to deliver, and it is not a project that can proceed without local support, private sector investment and the commitment of manufacturers, rolling stock companies, network operators and a range of other stakeholders to back it now and into the future.

“I’m not in the business of over-promising and under-delivering. But I am saying that if we can consolidate the very considerable levels of enthusiasm communicated to us, we will commit our best endeavours to the next stages of this project – working towards the

completion of this exciting, integrated GLOBAL centre of RAIL excellence.”

[Seren opens the door to Yale University's Yale Young Global Scholars summer programme](#)

The pupils, all part of the [Seren Network](#), will join over 1500 other students from 126 countries and 50 US states on Yale's Young Global Scholars Programme (YYGS), at Yale University's New Haven campus in the US, as part a new scholarship opportunity made possible through the Seren Network.

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, will join the first group of pupils from Wales to travel to Yale's New Haven campus as she looks to build on links already made with the university through Seren.

The Education Secretary will also travel to both Harvard University and MIT in Boston to discuss new opportunities and collaborations.

This opportunity has been made available to Welsh students thanks to a jointly funded scholarship between Yale Young Global Scholars (YYGS) and the Welsh Government. The flight costs have been supported through sponsorship by businesses in Wales who are all rooting for the Welsh students.

The students will each spend two weeks at Yale's New Haven campus, where they will take part in a rigorous academic programme led by world-leading academics in one of six areas, including International Affairs & Security, Frontiers of Science & Technology and Politics, Law & Economics.

The partnership has been established to broaden the academic horizons of Welsh students, giving them a taste of university life in the States and the opportunity to make strong university applications when they return.

Kirsty Williams said:

“It is a huge success story for Seren that we've been able to broker a partnership which will see Yale's renowned Young Global Scholars programme made accessible to students across Wales.

“I'm proud to be joining our first ever group of students to take part in this life-changing summer programme and look forward to making new links with other universities as we try to open new doors for many more of our students.

“I want every pupil in every school in every part of Wales to know that if you work hard then no academic opportunity is off-limits. I think this is a perfect example of what is possible and I want to thank all the sponsors involved in making this happen.”

This partnership has been made possible through Liam Rahman, a Yale University alumnus born and raised in Carmarthenshire. A Co-Director at E-Equal Recruitment Education in Cardiff and West Wales, Liam is an avid supporter of The Seren Network and has been the driving force throughout the partnership. E-Equal Recruitment Education is a headline sponsor of the partnership, having raised in excess of £10,000 to fund the cost of students' flights to and from the US.

Liam said:

“Since returning to Wales last year, it's been a real privilege to work with high potential Welsh students through the Seren Network and to be an interviewer for Yale's Undergraduate Admissions Office in Wales through Yale's Alumni Schools Committee.

“Over the past few months, I've worked to build the relationship between Yale Young Global Scholars and The Seren Network, which has culminated in this fantastic partnership and scholarship opportunity.

“This scholarship will deliver life-changing opportunities to some of Wales's brightest sixth formers and gives Yale the opportunity to access some of Wales's very best talent.”