

£6m to support older people to live at home

Care & Repair agencies work in every part of Wales and provide services to help older people live as independently as possible in their own homes. As well as delivering small adaptations to properties, agencies also provide free home visits to help keep residents safe and warm, and protect their health and well-being.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Housing adaptations play an important role in helping many older and disabled people live safely and independently. As well as improving their lives, it reduces pressure on frontline health and social care services. The services provided by Care and Repair agencies help people to live longer at home with more confidence and dignity, and with an improved quality of life.

“This funding will enable agencies to provide valuable support at the heart of the communities they serve, working closely with partners in Health, Social Care, Housing and the rest of the third sector.”

There are 13 Care and Repair agencies in Wales whose responsibilities cover every local authority area. Last year Care and Repair agencies helped more than 40,000 older people in Wales, carried out over £11.5 million of repairs, helped more than 22,000 with safety and falls-prevention work, and carried out some 17,000 small adaptations.

Counsel General visits Ireland on fact-finding mission

The Counsel General will visit the Law Reform Commission and will also meet the Attorney General for Ireland, Séamus Woulfe, the British Ambassador for Ireland, Robin Barnett and the new Chief Parliamentary Counsel, June Reardon.

Consolidation, codification and simplification of legislation will feature on the agenda when Jeremy Miles meets Mr Justice John Quirke SC, President of the Law Reform Commission. This has been a focus for the Commission since 2014 and the Counsel General will discuss lessons learnt to inform Wales' Draft Legislation Bill, currently out for public consultation, and wider

efforts to make Welsh law more accessible.

Speaking ahead of the visit the Counsel General said:

“The complexity of the law that applies to Wales is a big problem and steps need to be taken to simplify it and make it more accessible to everyone. It is vital that citizens understand their rights and responsibilities under the law; they know what the law means and who is responsible for what. This is a question of social justice.

“The Draft Legislation (Wales) Bill is currently out for public consultation, so the visit provides a useful opportunity to learn from the work that the Law Reform Commission has already done in this area.”

Later in the day Brexit will be on the agenda in talks with the Attorney General, Séamus Woulfe SC, as withdrawal from the EU will throw up complex legal problems.

Brexit will also feature tomorrow (1 June) when finding common solutions to the legal implications of EU withdrawal will be discussed at a meeting of law officers in Belfast. The Counsel General will join the Scottish Lord Advocate, James Wolffe QC, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, John Larkin QC, and the law officers for Jersey and Gibraltar.

Local authorities expected to improve access to public toilets

The move comes following concerns that local authorities have been closing public toilets, and that better use could be made of toilets within public buildings, such as libraries and sport centres.

A lack of accessible local toilets can limit people's lives by stopping them going out, which can lead to isolation, anxiety and other health conditions. Certain groups of people are more likely to be impacted than others, with the elderly, people with certain health conditions and disabilities, carers and parents of young children most affected.

Under the Welsh Government's Public Health (Wales) Act, local authorities now have one year to assess the needs of its community, including changing facilities for babies and Changing Places facilities for disabled persons, and put a strategy in place to ensure the public will have greater access to these facilities.

The expectation is that the strategy will go beyond the provision of traditional stand-alone public toilets, and look at new and creative solutions, including bringing toilets in public buildings into wider use and working with private businesses to make their facilities available to the public.

The Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“While we would all benefit from greater public access to toilet facilities, there are certain groups for whom a lack of public toilets can cause distress, eventually discouraging them from visiting parts of the community.

“I understand the pressures on local authority services, but as well as isolating members of the community, poor provision can impact on tourism, the economy and use of public amenities. Through long-term planning and creative thinking we can improve people’s experiences when they are out and about in their communities.”

Mr Gething added:

“I expect local authorities to talk to the public and representative groups about the challenges they face in accessing local toilets, listen to their concerns and get them involved in improving access in their community.”

Statutory guidance on how local authorities prepare, consult on and publish their local toilets strategies will be issued in the coming weeks.

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales reappointment of two existing members to the Panel

Alun Davies said:

“I am pleased to announce the re-appointment of Gregory Owens and Stephen Mulholland.

“These re-appointments will ensure there are the necessary skills and expertise on the Panel as it continues to deliver a fair and affordable remuneration framework for local authorities in Wales.

“Mr Owens and Mr Mulholland have both served as councillors and will continue to bring valuable experience to the roles.”

The re-appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments and will commence on 1 January 2019 for a two year term.

As member Mr Mulholland is paid a daily fee of £198 with a time commitment of at least one day a month.

As vice chair Mr Owens is paid a daily fee of £226 with a time commitment of at least one day per month.

Mr Owens has declared political activity.

Service helping to keep families together goes Wales-wide

The Reflect programme was initially developed by Newport City Council, with the assistance of Barnardo's Cymru, to support mothers following the compulsory, permanent removal of one or more children due to child protection concerns.

In every year since 2010, Newport has seen between 11 and 16 babies removed at birth and placed for adoption when the child's mother has previously had a child removed. In one family, nine children had been removed at birth. Heads of Children's Services across Wales have established this pattern is common across the country.

Last year, the Welsh Government announced an additional £8m investment to provide further support for looked after children. £850,000 a year has been allocated to support the roll-out of the Reflect programme across Wales.

Reflect delivers intensive, one-to-one support to at-risk women in the hope that they can improve their lives, by reducing the emotional, social and financial costs of children being taken into care in the future. Those involved are offered emotional support alongside practical help including contraceptive advice and access to housing, education and employment services.

Services have already supported nearly 100 women across the country.

The Reflect programme is a key preventative work strand within the Welsh Government's programme of work to improve outcomes for looked after children.

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

“The Reflect project aims to break the cycle of children being taken into the care system and to give women the opportunity to develop new skills and responses that can help them create a more positive future for themselves, their child and wider family.

“Recurrent care proceedings have a significant human cost on the mothers involved, their children and their families. That is why I’m pleased the Welsh Government has been able to fund the Reflect programme, allowing it to be rolled out across Wales, helping to ensure even more families receive the help and support they need to stay together.”