

Child poverty still on Welsh Government agenda

Addressing Children in Wales's Child Poverty Conference, the Cabinet Secretary reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty.

He said the focus on employability, early years and empowerment has put far greater emphasis on those areas which support children to have the best start in life.

This approach has seen increasing investment in initiatives which are key to preventing and reducing poverty, delivering a more equal and prosperous Wales.

While recognising that more needed to be done the Cabinet Secretary said the Welsh Government is making progress towards achieving its child poverty objectives in a number of areas.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Employment in Wales is close to a record high and the number of children living in workless households is at an all time low. We have reduced the gap in educational attainment between pupils eligible for Free School Meals and those who are not, exceeding our target for pupils achieving the expected level at Foundation Phase.”

The Cabinet Secretary said early childhood experiences are important for a child's long-term development and their achievements in later life which is why a focus on early intervention and prevention is important, particularly in respect of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Carl Sargeant added:

“Tackling poverty is the responsibility of every Cabinet Secretary and every Minister. While we do not underestimate the scale of our challenge, we must also recognise the opportunities available.”

Big budget US comedy Show Dogs spent £4.7m filming in Wales – Hollywood producer is keen to return after ‘a great experience’

Riverstone Pictures, founded by Deepak Nayar and Nik Bower, has just completed filming in Wales where the majority of principal photography for Show Dogs was carried out at Pinewood Studio Wales, and locations in Wales doubling for the US.

Deepak, who produced with Philip von Alvensleben, said:

“Principal photography is now complete and we’re really happy with how it went and have high expectations for Show Dogs.

“We had a great time in Wales and I was delighted with the Welsh crews we worked with – they were thoroughly professional, very accommodating, welcoming and friendly. We couldn’t have asked for more.

“It’s been a great experience and one I’d like to repeat as I’m very keen to carry out more projects in Wales – so watch this space.”

The production which was supported by business finance from the Welsh Government as well as the Media Investment Budget, advised by Pinewood Pictures, spent more than £4.7m on Welsh goods and services in the region.

It also offered work and development opportunities for Welsh crew with the majority of principal photography filmed at a variety of Welsh locations.

Welsh Government Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“We promote Wales as being an excellent location for feature films and TV productions so it’s particularly good to hear that a producer of Deepak Nayar’s standing not only had a great experience filming in Wales but is keen to return with more projects. That’s a great testimonial and we couldn’t ask for a better endorsement.”

Show dogs is a family comedy starring Will Arnett and Natasha Lyonne and features a cast of talking dogs using computer-generated visual effects to animate and manipulate the faces of the live dog characters.

The film centres on Max, a rugged, lone-wolf Rottweiler NYPD police dog

partnered with Arnett. The two investigate the kidnapping of a baby panda by an underground network of illegal animal traders and a tip that they plan to sell the panda at the prestigious Canini Invitational Dog Show. The dog must undergo a makeover with the help of a seasoned trainer (Lyonne) – mud baths, ballet lessons, a Brazilian waxing to go undercover in order to thwart the plot.

Show Dogs is directed by Raja Gosnell, whose credits include Scooby-Doo, The Smurfs and Beverly Hills Chihuahua. Sales are being handled by Open Road International which has pre-sold it into various international territories with a US release scheduled for January 2018.

[Carl Sargeant outlines steps being taken following Grenfell Tower fire](#)

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement during an update to Assembly Members on the steps being taken in Wales following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The group will include representatives from the social housing and fire sectors and will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Everyone is, of course, horrified by the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in west London last week. My deepest sympathies are with those who have been affected by it.”

He said a first round of urgent discussions with all residential social landlords in Wales had been completed.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Between all residential social landlords in Wales, they own 36 blocks of flats of seven or more storeys.

“Social landlords have told us none of those appear to have been fitted with the type of cladding used in the Grenfell Tower. Seven blocks in Wales have been retro-fitted with sprinklers – and of course where any new or converted blocks are developed here, under the changes introduced as part of the Domestic Fire Safety Measure (Wales) 2011, they would be required to include sprinklers. The requirements were introduced for flats and houses on 1 January 2016.

“Installing sprinklers in new housing and as part of refurbishment programmes, which some Welsh councils and housing associations have already done, will go a long way towards minimising the risk of death and injury from fire.

“I hope this gives some immediate reassurance to the residents of those premises.”

The Cabinet Secretary added that the expert group will also consider how prepared Wales would be to deal with such an incident as Grenfell if it were to occur.

He said:

“We need to make certain of our capability to do that and learn any lessons that emerge from events in London.

“My officials and I are in regular contact with counterparts in England and Scotland, to ensure that we pool intelligence and share learning.

“This process is at an early stage and it will be some time before the full truth about what happened at Grenfell Tower is known. However, the Welsh Government is completely committed to acting on those findings, while doing all that we can in the meantime to keep the people of Wales safe from fire.”

Strengthened approach to tackling bovine TB in Wales announced

From the 1st October this year, Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas will be established in Wales based on bovine TB incidence levels.

Enhanced measures will be applied in each TB Area tailored to protect the Low TB Area and reduce the disease in the Intermediate and High TB Areas. This follows consideration of the responses to a consultation launched at the end of last year.

The enhanced controls include introducing post-movement testing in the Low TB Areas from the 1st October 2017. This will protect the area by identifying infected animals at the earliest opportunity, before they can go on to infect others. This measure will also be introduced in the Intermediate TB Areas next year to stop the risk of the disease spreading from the neighbouring High TB Areas.

The priority for High TB Areas is to continue to reduce the number of TB breakdowns. Under the Programme, chronic breakdown herds will have individual action plans with disease control measures specifically aimed at clearing up infection in cattle.

In these chronic breakdown herds, where there is evidence of infection in the badger population, we will consider a range of options to reduce the risk of disease spread, including cage-trapping, testing and where necessary humanely killing infected badgers.

The Cabinet Secretary continues to rule out large scale culling of badgers that is being applied in England.

Speaking at the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Over the last few years we have made real progress towards eradicating TB in Wales. The number of new incidents has fallen by over 40% since its peak in 2009 and currently 95% of herds in Wales are TB free.

“I have listened to the industries responses to our consultation and have fed what was appropriate and reasonable into the Programme. This should not be seen as exclusively a Government plan; it has been developed through consultation with industry, and will be reviewed over time. I now call on the farming industry and veterinary profession to play a full part. Together we can achieve our goal of a TB free Wales.”

The new [TB Eradication Programme and Delivery Plan](#) are available on the Welsh Government website.

Breast cancer drug approved for use in Wales

Roche has now agreed with NHS Wales the same commercial access agreement as NHS England. This means that Welsh patients with certain types of advanced breast cancer will be able to benefit from the treatment.

The Welsh Government's £80 million New Treatment Fund has been designed to ensure new medicines such as Kadcyła® can be made available as soon as possible, and certainly within two months of the recommendation from NICE.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“I am very pleased to be able to announce that Kadcyła® has been approved for use in Wales following negotiations with the manufacturer.

“We are committed to improving the introduction of innovative, evidence-based, treatments, which is why we’ve introduced an £80 million treatment fund in Wales. The fund will be used to ensure patients get fast-access to this innovative, life-prolonging drug.”