

Actions to boost employability in Wales highlighted in progress report

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan today announced the publication of the first [progress report](#) on the delivery of the plan, which was published in March this year. The report showcases key achievements so far, highlights ongoing work and sets out developments planned for the future.

The publication follows the Minister's visit to the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend to launch Project Search. The project is an excellent example of the individualised approach to overcoming barriers to employment advocated by the Employability Plan.

Run by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, Bridgend College and *Elite Supported Employment Agency*, the project helps young people with additional learning needs or disabilities into work by providing them with supported internships with the aim of them securing paid employment, either with the employer or on the open jobs market, at the end of the placement.

The Minister met Olivia and Bradley, two of the ten interns taking part in the project, as they started work across various departments in the hospital and the mentors who will be supporting them.

Following the visit the Minister said:

“Our Employability Plan recognises that different people experience different barriers which prevent them entering work. For people with additional learning needs or disabilities, schemes like Project Search which give them the opportunity to show what they can do, maybe with some support to begin with, are vital.

“It was great to meet Bradley and Olivia as they start on their employment journeys and to hear about their hopes for their future careers. I am proud that our Employability Plan is ensuring the right support is in place for them, and others, to overcome the barriers to employment they face.”

Announcing the publication of the report, she said:

“I am pleased to announce today the publication of our first progress report on the delivery of our Employability Plan. The report sets out highlights over the past six months, showcasing our key achievements so far, as well as giving a flavour of work ongoing and future developments to come.

“We are just six months into a ten year plan but we have made a promising start – working to better understand existing barriers and the actions needed to deliver real change and setting in motion a far-reaching new approach to improving employability across Wales.”

€4.3 million of EU funding support for Ireland-Wales marine observation scheme

The STREAM (Sensor Technologies for Remote Environmental Aquatic Monitoring) project will bring together partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to better understand the impact of climate change; lower the cost of marine observation and accelerate the process of data provision.

The £5.4 million project is supported through the EU’s Ireland-Wales Co-operation Programme and led by the Waterford Institute of Technology, with project partners Swansea University and Cork Institute of Technology.

STREAM will develop sensors capable of providing real-time environmental data through web portals, mobile applications and mass-produced sensors for organisations responsible for protecting and improving Welsh and Irish waters. Data collected will be shared locally to keep coastal communities informed about the local impacts of climate change.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Preserving our marine environment in Wales and Ireland for economic prosperity and enjoyment is vitally important. This is an excellent example of how EU funds are enabling partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to support communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

Paschal Donohoe TD, the Irish Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, said:

“I am delighted to see the launch of another EU-funded project supported by the Ireland-Wales Programme. The continuing co-operation between our 2 nations in areas such as scientific research yields benefits on all sides.

“Climate change is a shared challenge, which serves to highlight the importance of cross-border co-operation through projects like STREAM. By furthering our understanding of the impact of climate change in this way we will be better placed to combat it in the future, improving the quality of our seas for the years to come.”

Dr Joe O’Mahony, principal investigator at the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), added:

“WIT welcomes the significant investment made by the EU in further developing the marine sensing and communications knowledge base in our cross-border region.

“This investment builds on the unique blend of expertise offered across all partner organisations and will ensure the cross-border region continues to be an exemplar for clean and productive seas.

“We are very much looking forward to working with our partners in Wales and Ireland on this very exciting and important operation.”

[£4m investment to transform eye care in Wales](#)

Speaking at the All Wales National Eye Care Conference in Cardiff today (17 September) Mr Gething said the money will transform services to ensure patients are diagnosed and treated more quickly.

Decisions about exactly how the £4m will be allocated will be taken by the Welsh Government following advice from an independent panel and could potentially include the expansion of existing community based treatment centres, additional training for medical staff to treat a greater range of patients and other activities to support sustainable services.

The service changes will support the introduction of a new performance measure to be introduced later this month, based on patient’s clinical need. Wales will be the first UK nation to introduce a measure of this kind for eye care patients alongside the existing referral to treatment target.

The changes are being introduced following consultation with ophthalmologists and RNIB about the best way to ensure eye patients are seen and treated in good time.

Mr Gething said: “Regular sight tests and early diagnosis are

extremely important in order to prevent and treat eye disease.

Currently nearly 107,000 people in Wales are living with sight loss and this is predicted to double by 2050. Improving access and speeding up diagnosis are vital to ensure eye care services are fit for the future.

The investment will be used to improve services to support the new performance measure for eye care services. From this month, all eye care patients in Wales will be given a maximum waiting time following referral and any ongoing reviews based on their condition and risk of harm.

We were the first government in the world to have an eye care delivery plan and are now the first in the UK to introduce a performance measure of this kind for eye care.

These changes are in line with our long term vision for the NHS in Wales to transform the way services are delivered, providing quality care closer to people's homes."

First Minister officially opens state-of-the-art school in Bridgend

Betws Primary School is the fifth of its kind to be built in Bridgend County Borough over the past 5 years thanks to a Welsh Government funding scheme. The 21st Century Schools and Education Programme supports schools to upgrade their buildings, outdoor areas and IT equipment to match modern-day needs.

The previous Betws Primary was demolished after it was badly damaged following a fire but it has now made way for 2 contemporary buildings; the new Betws Primary and a Welsh-medium primary, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon Y Cymoedd, relocating from nearby Pontycymer.

The new building is part of a £10.8 million investment for the Garw Valley south area, supported by around £5.4 million from Welsh Government.

In November, Welsh Government announced a second round of investment in the 21st Century Schools Programme which will see a further £2.3 billion invested in modernising education infrastructure across Wales.

Although the school started welcoming students through its doors in January, the First Minister's visit will celebrate the beginning of the school's first full academic year. Pupils had previously been taught in portable classrooms following the 2012 fire which destroyed the junior block.

Ahead of the opening, First Minister Carwyn Jones, said,

“It’s a real privilege to open this fantastic new school in Betws. Visiting new schools is a great opportunity to see first-hand how Welsh Government, local authorities and schools work in partnership to deliver better education for our communities.

“We are committed to raising standards and delivering the best education to every child in our country.

“Our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme is the largest investment Welsh Government has made towards our schools and colleges since the 1960s. This will ensure Wales has schools that are not just the pride of Wales but the envy of other nations.”

Head teacher of Betws Primary School, Liz Pearce, said,

“The pupils of Betws Primary are very proud of their fantastic new school. The investment of Welsh Government along with Bridgend County Borough Council in developing outstanding 21st Century Schools has given our pupils opportunities to first class learning.

“From the attractively designed acoustics and brightly coloured paintwork to the soft play and Astroturf sports area, our pupils can learn and play in a superior learning environment.

“We are delighted to receive a visit from the First Minister as we know he is also passionate about the young people of Wales and are grateful for him taking time out of his busy schedule to open our school.”

The First Minister unveiled a plaque as part of the opening ceremony, supported by the Mayor of Bridgend, the Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, and its Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration.

[Appointment of independent members to the Regulatory Board for Wales](#)

The Board consider reports from the Regulator and other relevant publications and information sources to advise the Minister on the performance of the regulator, the sector and any related policy implications.

The Minister has appointed two new independent members to the Regulatory

Board

These appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. All such appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any declared) to be published.

Political Activity

Jane Mudd – Jane is Labour Party member and a Labour councillor for Malpas in Newport.

Kevin Lawrence – No political Activity declared

The appointments will commence on 1 September 2018 and expire automatically on 30 August 2021. The post of Independent Member is a paid post earning £198 per day.

Biographies

Jane Mudd

Jane is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and a former Chair of CIH Cymru.

Jane is the Principal Lecturer in Housing and Head of Department of Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Prior to this, Jane was Principal Lecturer in Housing and Head of Department of Applied Community Sciences, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Jane has a wealth of experience with more than 20 years of working in housing, teaching and researching.

Jane is a former board member of Newport City Homes and she is the Newport City Council Member for Regeneration and Housing.

Kevin Lawrence

Following a career as a lecturer in Computing and Information Technology, Kevin changed direction to dedicate his skills to the role of ILT (Information Learning Technology) Manager, developing learning platforms and delivering staff development to college staff. He has a keen interest in IT and the role it can play in both general management of day-to-day activities within a housing association and how it can help implement the regulatory framework. Since becoming a LINC tenant 2 years ago, he has become a keen member of their Tenant Panel and was recently elected as Chair.