

First Minister officially opens £18m North Wales Neonatal Unit

The Sub Regional Neonatal Intensive Care Centre (SuRNICC) is a 20-cot unit caring for the most poorly and premature babies born in North Wales and is part of the North Wales Neonatal Network, which links special care units in Wrexham and Bangor.

It includes a transitional care service to help parents of newborn babies spend more time with their infant, a neonatal transport service to ensure babies born across North Wales can access facilities at the unit, and on-site parent accommodation. It also meets the highest neonatal standards, and offers significantly improved facilities for both the families of the babies and staff.

The First Minister approved plans for the SuRNICC to be sited at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in 2014 following a recommendation from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to centralise neonatal services in North Wales.

The First Minister said:

“The SuRNICC is a wonderful new centre for neonatal intensive care in North Wales. I approved the siting of the unit at Glan Clwyd back in 2014, and it has been a real privilege to be here today to talk to staff and families about their experiences at the new facility.

“The teams across North Wales have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that the population have new neonatal services that care for sick and premature babies within the region, reducing the number of babies and families having to travel to England for their care.

“The people of North Wales have access to the very best neonatal care and everyone involved should be very proud of their achievements.”

Mandy Cooke, Neonatal Service Manager, said:

“We’re extremely proud of our new unit, and were delighted to show the First Minister around.

“The new facilities will help our neonatal team ensure poorly and premature babies, and their families, continue to receive outstanding care in North Wales for many years to come.”

SHWSH helps spread the word on the Welsh language

SHWSH promised 'hot bands, secret locations and free, exclusive experiences' around Cardiff in the run up to and during the Eisteddfod. Participants signed up by text to receive instructions and information on the gigs and exclusive discount codes from retailers across the city.

Over 450 people attended the seven intimate performances by the likes of Huw Stephens, Gwenno, Chroma, Mellt, Papur Wal, Han2k, H.Hawkline and Gwilym.

56% of attendees surveyed said they had already planned to attend the Cardiff Eisteddfod. However, 29% more stated that Shwsh inspired them to attend the festival. 91% of those surveyed also said they would attend more SHWSH gigs in future and 92% said they would listen to more Welsh language music or that they are already fans.

Joshua Roberts from Cardiff said:

"I'd never been to a Welsh language music event before but I liked how the events were organised and the secrecy element behind the undisclosed locations. The gigs themselves were really enjoyable and it was great to discover new musical acts that I might not otherwise have heard. Not being able to speak Welsh didn't feel like an issue because I was just enjoying the music and great atmosphere."

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan said:

"As with its big sister, Dydd Miwsig Cymru, one of the aims of SHWSH was to encourage those who may not speak Welsh to enjoy Welsh language music and to use that as stepping stone to the Eisteddfod, which, for the first time this year was free to visitors. Over 80% of those surveyed visited the Eisteddfod with 29% saying Shwsh inspired them to visit.

"Reaching the target of a million Welsh speakers is a task that requires culture change and government cannot do that alone. Education has a very important role to play in boosting the number among future generations but we also have to encourage adults to engage with and to learn the language.

"The Eisteddfod provides an excellent opportunity to inspire people to embrace the language and all the cultural benefits that brings so I am delighted SHWSH had a positive effect in encouraging people

who would not otherwise have attended the Eisteddfod to visit and to see what it has to offer.”

“The way we care for each other can define us a nation” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Speaking at the National Social Care Conference in Cardiff, the Minister told an audience of social services’ leaders that “the way we care for each other can define us a nation.”

He said that while steps have already been taken to help meet current challenges, “there will still be a need to consider further investment in the sector if we are to support everyone to live full and rewarding lives.”

The Minister discussed the scale of the challenge by revealing that during 2016 -17, local authorities provided care and support to around 10,000 more people aged over 65 than in the previous year.

The number of people aged over 85 living in Wales will increase by an estimated 119% by 2035, according to the National Population Needs Assessment report, published in 2017.

The Welsh Government is currently considering how its new fiscal levers could be developed as part of a wider consideration about potential new taxes in Wales. This has included consideration of a proposal by Professor Gerald Holtham to introduce a social care levy to raise additional resources for social care, which people would pay from their income.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Successfully meeting increased demand in all parts of the social care sector, raises many questions. Not least, what care and support will be required in the future? How should this be provided and how should this be funded?

“In part we are responding to this challenge by revitalising social care and support in Wales in a number of ways; by focusing more attention on prevention wherever we are able; by developing our Regional Partnership Board approach to the commissioning of care; by protecting funding for social care as much as we are able; and by listening and responding to what people tell us matters to them.

“While these steps make us better placed to meet current challenges, there will still be a need to consider further investment in the sector if we are to support everyone to live full and rewarding lives. As a result we have made a commitment in our national strategy for Wales, ‘Prosperity for All’, to develop innovative funding models that will help meet the demand for social care in the future.”

The Minister added:

“Encouraging citizens in Wales to engage in a dialogue about the future of social care could be a challenge. Negative stereotypes of ageing can deter people from planning for their future. Too often older people are framed as the cause of financial pressures rather than viewed as part of the solution. The reality is that as our population ages, more and more older people are contributing to society, not only by volunteering and providing vital care to their loved ones, but also by working and paying taxes.

“I believe we need to broker an honest conversation with citizens in Wales about the rewards and challenges of an ageing society. Social care must be seen as a positive choice that enables individuals to carry on living the life they chose. By placing individuals at the centre of their care, everyone can be supported to achieve their potential, to learn, to age well and, most importantly, to enjoy life.

“The way we care for each other can define us a nation.”

New fund aims to break down barriers to organ donation in black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities

Almost a third of black and Asian people in Wales are unsure about donating their organs for lifesaving transplants after their death according to new research by NHS Blood and Transplant.

A similar proportion – 31% – said they definitely did not want to donate. Just 16% of those surveyed said they would definitely donate all or some of their organs, while the remainder would consider it.

The main barrier is the belief that organ donation is against their culture

or religion. However, all the major religions in the UK support organ donation and transplantation.

Less than one in five (17%) of those surveyed were aware that organs matched by ethnicity had the best chance of success. Only one in 10 (11%) knew that people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to need an organ transplant than white people.

Community and faith based groups from across England and Wales are now being invited to apply for funding through a new community investment scheme, to help break down myths and barriers and increase support for organ donation among black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

The scheme is funded by the Welsh Government and the Department of Health and Social Care, and is led by NHS Blood and Transplant.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“We have seen huge improvements in consent rates for organ donation in Wales, but there are still people dying waiting for a transplant so we need as many people as possible, from all ethnic backgrounds to agree to donate.

“This latest research highlights the many misconceptions people still have about organ donation. We want to make sure people are fully informed when making their decision, which is why we are offering funding to help community groups talk to people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds about organ donation and the positive impact a decision to donate can have.”

Anthony Clarkson, NHS Blood and Transplant Interim Director for Organ Donation and Transplantation, said:

“Our research findings underline how important it is to address myths and barriers and encourage more people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to talk about organ donation.

“Community and faith-based organisations occupy a trusted place in their communities and can play a vital role in increasing support for and understanding of organ donation.

“This community investment scheme will enable these groups to promote a positive organ donation message and encourage more people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds to decide that they want to be a lifesaving organ donor and to share that decision with their families.”

£20,000 will be available for projects in Wales in the first year of the scheme. Organisations operating at a local level in both England and Wales

will be able to put in separate applications or combined applications to cover both areas.

There will be two levels of funding available. Applicants can apply for funding for projects up to £2,499 or for projects over the value of £2,500. All applications will be reviewed by an independent judging panel which will also oversee the projects as a steering group.

Applications should be received no later than 5pm on Monday, September 24th. Projects will need to be completed by end June 2019.

The community investment scheme is part of a Government campaign led by NHS Blood and Transplant with support from the National BAME Transplant Alliance (NBTA) to address the urgent need for black, Asian and minority ethnic donors.

Agriculture Bill is an important step in supporting Welsh farmers post-Brexit – Lesley Griffiths

The Bill will provide a legal base for future support for farmers as we transition away from the provisions in the Common Agricultural Policy. At the Cabinet Secretary's request, the Bill includes significant new powers for Welsh Ministers.

These powers will be used until a Wales Agriculture Bill is introduced to the National Assembly. The intention is to bring forward a Bill by the end of this Assembly term. It allows the Welsh Government to start to deliver a 'Made in Wales' system which works for Welsh farmers, rural industries and our communities.

In July, the Cabinet Secretary launched a consultation on proposals for a new Land Management Programme to replace the Common Agricultural Policy in Wales post-Brexit. The consultation is open until 30 October.

The proposed powers for Welsh Ministers include:

- new financial powers for future schemes
- collection and sharing of data
- powers to intervene in exceptional market conditions
- setting of marketing standards
- modification of retained EU law relating to the financing, management and monitoring of payments to farmers including the CAP Basic Payment Scheme.

The Welsh provisions in the Bill closely mirror those intended for England. In addition to a small number of technical differences, Welsh powers also include an emphasis on supporting rural communities and businesses involved in supply chains.

In general, these are enabling powers which provide for Welsh Ministers to bring forward Wales-specific regulations to the Welsh Assembly for scrutiny. Regulations will not be brought forward until the consultation process has concluded. In "Brexit and our Land" a commitment was made to bring forward a white paper in spring 2019.

Cabinet Secretary said:

"This is the first piece of post-Brexit legislation which allows us to continue to support farmers and develop new ways of working.

"We have worked closely with the UK Government to make sure this legislation works for Wales and it provides us with significant new powers. The Bill gives us the freedom and flexibility to take forward our own proposals for a made in Wales support system for farmers.

"Whilst we are generally supportive of the Bill as drafted, there are two outstanding issues – the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture and the Red Meat Levy – which we have not resolved.

"The UK Government has classified WTO as reserved but I am clear these powers could have a significant effect on devolved competence. We need to agree a better process for managing this important part of agricultural support. .

"I am disappointed the Bill does not contain provisions to improve the functioning of the Red Meat Levy. It is important the red meat industry can access funds to prepare best for the opportunities of Brexit and to react to inevitable change. Legislative change is required to underpin mechanisms for a fairer and more representative distribution of the levy. This Bill is a timely and appropriate opportunity and I continue to press the Secretary of State to bring forward a Government amendment to meet his commitment to resolve this longstanding issue through the Bill.

"The introduction of the Agriculture Bill is an important step in our transition to an agriculture support mechanism reflecting the needs and aspiration of Welsh industries as proposed in our Brexit and our Land consultation."