

Kirsty Williams announces £3.5m for promoting Welsh universities in a post-Brexit world

The new funding is for Global Wales, a partnership between Universities Wales, British Council Wales, the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. The support is via the Welsh Government's £50m EU Transition Fund to help business, public services and others prepare for the impacts of Brexit.

Established in 2015, Global Wales promotes Wales' universities in priority overseas markets: Vietnam and the United States. This funding will see a significant increase in the scope and scale of the programme to deliver the Study in Wales brand globally, develop existing activity in the US and Vietnam, and to expand to other markets. The aim is to drive education exports and boost Wales' profile as an outward-facing knowledge-economy.

Both Vietnam and the US have been identified as two increasingly important markets for a post-Brexit Wales. The funding will reflect this by supporting a Wales-Vietnam scholarship programme, identifying areas for joint-research and promoting Wales as a distinct study destination for Vietnam, the United States and other key markets, including Europe.

The Education Secretary's announcement coincides with the visit to Wales by His Excellency Tran Ngoc An, Vietnamese Ambassador to the UK, which will see discussions on strengthening educational links between the two countries.

Kirsty Williams said:

"I am very pleased to announce this funding for Global Wales so that they can strengthen the developing relationships we have with both Vietnam and the US.

"In a post-Brexit world we need to make sure that our HE sector continues to reach out to new and emerging markets.

"Our universities have so much to offer so we need to make sure that we look further afield to capitalise on the growing demand for higher education globally.

"I'm proud to welcome His Excellency Tran Ngoc An to Wales and hope that this announcement will be the beginning of a very productive partnership between our two countries."

Ambassador Tran Ngoc An said:

“As Ambassador of Vietnam to the UK, I highly appreciate the announcement of the Welsh Government to establish a fund for promotion of education co-operation between Wales and Vietnam. I am confident that with strong political will and join effort, our education co-operation will certainly be further developed.

“Our Minister of Education and Training is looking forward to welcoming HE Mrs Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary of Education to Vietnam to lay a foundation for our education co-operation.”

Prof. Iwan Davies, Chair of the Global Wales Board, said:

“I am delighted that the Welsh Government is making this significant new investment in Global Wales. The announcement today represents an important vote of confidence in our world class universities and the role that they, along with the Global Wales partners, play in helping to underpin the economy of Wales.

“Overseas students, international research collaboration and global institutional partnerships all help build trust and goodwill for Wales around the world, which in turn, has the potential to have a transformational impact on the Welsh economy. In the uncertain context of Brexit, this new investment in Global Wales will strengthen the major contribution that higher education plays to Wales’ international engagement and reputation for years to come.”

Creative Wales to build on successes of Cadw and Visit Wales

Speaking at the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, Lord Elis-Thomas outlined his plans for the body, which will sit within Welsh Government but have the autonomy to make its own commercial decisions based on an expert understanding of the industry and its needs.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“Our Creative Industries have enjoyed unprecedented success over recent years, with Welsh Government support helping attract and produce award winning TV dramas, films and a whole host besides, showcasing Wales to the world whilst supporting local jobs and boosting the economy.

“We are now at a crucial point where opportunities are converging

and, with the right support over the coming years, the industry's successes could become even more significant, and therefore the rewards for Wales even greater. This will require bespoke support to aid business growth in the sector as part of a wider, more rounded approach, allowing us to respond more flexibly to businesses and an industry that moves and changes quickly. Creative Wales will help achieve this.

"A Government vehicle offering a streamlined, dynamic and innovative service to this sector, Creative Wales will provide tailored support for indigenous Small and Medium Enterprises, productions and freelancers as well as supply chain companies. It will also continue to provide funding through the Media Investment Budget and bespoke access to our new Economic Futures Fund.

"I'm fortunate to already have as part of my portfolio two bodies within Government with the flexibility and know-how to act and react quickly to the needs of the industry, Visit Wales and Cadw. These are well trusted, well equipped and well-structured bodies providing a dedicated voice for the sector and adding hundreds of millions of pounds of value to our economy through targeted investment and innovative working.

"My ambition is for Creative Wales to follow a similar model, providing the support the sector needs and has called for to compete with the World's best, but with a level of accountability which ensures tax payers money is being wisely and purposefully spent. This will provide the best possible platform to build on the hard work we've seen to date – further raising skill levels, strengthening the supply chain and improving networks in order to help this now well established industry to take its next steps. I hope to have it up and running as soon as possible."

The Minister added that he envisaged Creative Wales to be structured to include an external Board and Chair, and operations led by a Chief Executive or equivalent role.

[New members of Brexit advisory group announced](#)

The group, which is chaired by Mr Drakeford, provides advice to the Welsh Government on the challenges and opportunities arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It was established in July 2016, following the EU referendum result in June and the first meeting took place in September 2016.

The European Advisory Group brings together people with experience and a detailed understanding of European issues, including Members of the European Parliament, business leaders and representatives from universities, colleges, trade unions, agriculture, public services and the third sector.

The following new members have been announced:

- Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Housing and Regeneration
- Dr Chris Jones, Chair of the Health Education and Improvement Wales
- Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd; Former Lord Chief Justice
- Alison Lea-Wilson co-founder Halen Môn/Anglesey Sea Salt
- Alec Don, CEO of Milford Haven Port Authority
- Dr Jo Hunt, Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University
- Baroness Ilora Finlay of Llandaff, House of Lords

Mark Drakeford said:

“The new members were recruited for their expertise in areas that will inevitably be affected by our withdrawal from the EU. The issues raised by the UK’s departure from the European Union go far beyond the interests of any particular party or Government. No single individual or party has a monopoly on good ideas, and we look forward to further benefitting from this group’s advice.”

[£15million for critical care services in Wales](#)

The funding will be used to strengthen critical care so it can continue to deliver the very highest standard of care to those who need it in the future.

It will help to redesign the way critical care services in Wales are delivered and develop a national model of care for those who are critically ill.

This model will look at developing and expanding the workforce, increasing the number of critical care beds and the options for transferring critically ill patients.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“Critical care is one of the areas of the NHS that has acutely felt the strains and challenges facing the whole system. Despite this, those who require critical support continue to receive high

standards of care thanks to the dedication and compassion of staff.

“Last month I published our long-term plan for future health and social care, which set out how services will be adapted to meet future challenges. Today’s funding will help us to do this within critical care, with a firmer central hand in place to ensure the right services are delivered in the right place, at the right time to secure more sustainable services for the future.”

A Task and Finish Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Jones, will be established to develop the national model and oversee the allocation of funding.

Most parents think it's wrong to smack a child – new research

The ‘Parental Attitudes Towards Managing Young Children’s Behaviour 2017’ research found 11% of parents with young children reported they had smacked their children in the last 6 months as a way of managing their behaviour. This figure has halved from 22% in 2015.

The research shows 81% of parents disagreed that “it is sometimes necessary to smack a naughty child”, a significant increase from 71% in 2015.

The number of parents who reported they may smack a child under certain circumstances has fallen from 44% to 31%. Within this, only 5% reported they are comfortable with the idea and would do it when necessary, with a further 26% not liking the idea but saying they will if nothing else works.

Parents reported using a wide variety of alternative techniques to manage their children’s behaviour. The most frequently reported techniques were:

- Praising good behaviour,
- Developing routines,
- Saying no, and
- Telling them off.

The Welsh Government plans to end the physical punishment of children in Wales. The proposed legislation is part of a much wider package of measures the Welsh Government is taking to support children to have the best start in life, and to support parents to do the best job they can.

When parents were asked whether there should be a complete ban on smacking, the balance of opinion is with those who think smacking should not be allowed

with 48% agreeing with a ban and 39% disagreeing. There has been a small change in support for the ban since 2015 when 46% agreed and 43% disagreed.

Welcoming the research, Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“I’m very pleased to see from this research that so few parents think that smacking a child is sometimes necessary, and that fewer parents are using physical punishment to manage their child’s behaviour.

“This is exactly the culture change we want to see happening in Wales. While it’s great to see that 81% of parents think it’s never acceptable to smack a child, as a government, we want to ensure every parent recognises that it’s never acceptable to smack a child. This is why we intend to bring forward legislation to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable in Wales.”

It is currently against the law for a parent or carer to physically punish their child, except where this amounts to ‘reasonable punishment’.

The proposed legislation would not involve the creation of a new offence. It would instead remove the defence of ‘reasonable punishment’ to the existing offences of assault and battery. It would mean any adult looking after a child would no longer be able to use physical or corporal punishment against them.