

£200,000 to engage communities across Wales in cultural activities

The Economy Secretary confirmed that eight separate organisations across Wales, including local authorities and housing associations, had been successful in their applications to the Welsh Government's Fusion programme.

Since its inception in 2015, the [Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme](#) has worked with over 5,000 people and 150 partners to deliver a huge range of projects to young people and adults across Wales. Fusion has enabled community members to widen their horizons and increase their confidence, skills and qualifications by taking part in cultural activities. It has seen young people taking over the running of museums and castles, famous artworks taken out to primary schools and professional opera performances on school buses. Adults have volunteered and gained qualifications to help improve employability, and taken part in schemes to boost health and digital inclusion.

This latest round of Fusion funding will enable innovative partnerships to transform many more lives in some of Wales' most economically disadvantaged areas. Local authorities, housing associations and employment programmes will link directly with museums, theatres, libraries and other cultural sites, ensuring that cultural programmes are accessible to all.

The Economy Secretary, said:

"Fusion is an innovative, low-cost intervention that promotes collaboration to better serve the needs of the people of Wales. Since the launch of the Fusion we have worked with Local Authorities, heritage sites, theatres and others to encourage thousands of people who might not normally have engaged in cultural activities to get involved. I am very pleased to be able to allocate more than £200,000 to eight new projects across Wales that will enable this important work to continue.

Most people in Wales satisfied with their daily lives and public services

The new wide-ranging National Survey for Wales 2016-17 provides a fresh picture of the levels of wellbeing and satisfaction with public services in Wales and the issues facing local communities. The results show 82% of

people in Wales are overall generally satisfied with their lives.

The National Survey for Wales is a face-to-face survey of over 10,000 randomly-selected adults aged 16 and over, carried out across Wales. The results are used by the Welsh Government to help make Wales a better place to live.

The survey began in its original form in 2012. From 2016-17 onwards it replaces the Welsh Health Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey and the Active Adults Survey.

Key results from the National Survey 2016-17 include:

- 90% were satisfied with their GP care, 91% were satisfied with the care they received at their last NHS appointment and 96% of hospital patients felt treated with dignity and respect.
- 90% of parents were satisfied with their child's primary school and 85% with their child's secondary school;
- 70% rated their experience of social care as either excellent or good;
- 66% were able to keep up with all bills and commitments without difficulty;
- 73% felt that people in their local area treated each other with respect and consideration;
- 48% feel optimistic about the future;
- 80% visited the outdoors in the last twelve months;
- 62% walk or cycle to get around; and
- 85% of people use the internet.

The survey for 2016-17 reveals people's views on how the Welsh Government is doing its job and their views on the health and education, where zero is 'extremely bad' and ten is 'extremely good'. The overall rating for the Welsh Government was 5.6, for health 6.2 and for education 6.2.

Welcoming the results, Finance and Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"This new wide-ranging survey provides us with a fresh picture of public services and the experiences of people using them and their lives more generally.

"This survey has been taken against the backdrop of uncertainty following the Brexit referendum result and the UK Government's continued austerity programme.

"Despite this, the results published today show that people in Wales are generally satisfied with the public services that are so important to us all.

"We know there are difficult times to come with our public finances

and we all need to prepare for these challenges. The findings of this survey are very timely and will help us all ensure we are able to deliver the world class services people rightly expect.

“Hearing the views of people across the country will help us make Wales an even better place to live, work and enjoy.”

New proposals to strengthen health and care quality and governance in Wales

The proposals are part of a White Paper, Services Fit for the Future, Quality and Governance in Health and Care in Wales, published jointly by Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans.

The White Paper includes a number of proposals designed to support and encourage more integrated ways of working and better decision-making, putting the interests of people at the heart of service planning and delivery.

The proposals include common standards and joint complaints handling; better decision-making across health boards through a new Duty of Quality for the Population of Wales and a clearer process for service change; as well as further promoting a culture of openness in the health and social care system through a new Duty of Candour.

There are also proposals for strengthening the way the public is represented across health and social care, and for regulation and inspection.

The proposals set out in the White Paper are:

- strengthening leadership of Health Boards to promote stronger governance and leadership to ensure services are led, planned and developed in the way they need to be in the years to come
- the introduction a Duty of Quality for the Population of Wales which will focus on health boards working together to meet the needs of the population in the planning and delivery of quality healthcare services
- the joint investigations of complaints which span health and social care, irrespective of setting – this will involve requiring different organisations to work together to investigate complaints making it easier for people when their concern is about both health and social care services
- strengthening of the voice of citizens – this includes proposals to replace the current model of Community Health Councils with a new

independent arrangements which would represent the interests of citizens across health and social care

- a clearer process for service change – introducing an independent mechanism to provide clinical advice on substantial service change decisions, with advice from the proposed new citizen voice body, which will encourage continuous engagement and increase the pace of strategic change
- improving inspection and regulation – including improving the legal framework for the inspection and regulation of health services and questions about whether a new independent body for patient voice and regulation and inspection should be established.

The White Paper builds on work already done following the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Services (Wales) Act 2016.

The Welsh Government will dovetail these proposals with the outcome of the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales.

Launching the consultation, Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, we are fortunate to enjoy some of the best health and social care services anywhere in the world, provided by committed staff at all levels. The well-respected OECD, in their report last year, commented favourably on our systems in Wales but also challenged us to do more to fulfil our potential of providing excellent person-centred care to all our citizens.

“The proposals we are publishing today will ensure our health and social care services are fit for the future. The White Paper looks at a number of key aspects of the health and care system and suggests some changes which we believe could make a real difference by putting people at the centre of service delivery. It will also enable health and social care organisations to work together and across boundaries to ensure they deliver the very best care for people across Wales.”

The consultation on the White Paper will run from 28 June until 29 September.

First Minister sets out legislative priorities

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, has today set out his government's

legislative priorities for the year ahead.

In the first of 5 bills, the Welsh Government will introduce legislation that will make it illegal for alcohol to be sold below a set price.

Evidence shows a direct link between drinking harmful levels and the availability of cheap alcohol. The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) Bill will propose a formula for calculating the minimum price for alcohol, based on its strength and volume, and enable local authorities to enforce the powers and bring prosecutions.

The government is also introducing a bill to stop landlords and estate agents from charging unfair, up-front fees to tenants and prospective tenants in the private rented sector.

Increasing evidence shows the current fees – which can be as high as £700 – are a barrier to people looking to rent their own place and discourage people from moving home. The bill will provide private renters with clarity about the costs involved and ensure the system is fair and sustainable.

Over the next 12 months, the government will also introduce a bill that will pave the way for one of its key pledges – 30 hours of free childcare a week for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds.

Good progress is being made on the childcare offer, with the first pilot set to begin in September. The bill will support this and enable the childcare offer to be rolled out in full by 2020 by creating a national system for applications and eligibility checks.

The Welsh Government will also bring forward legislation to reform local government in Wales. The bill will establish a new relationship between the Welsh Government and local government, create greater transparency in decision making and ensure greater collaboration through mandatory regional working arrangements.

The government will also bring forward legislation in the next 12 months to reform the regulatory controls for registered social landlords in Wales. In September 2016, the Office for National Statistics reclassified RSLs into the public sector. As a consequence, any private sector borrowing by RSLs will become a charge against the Welsh Government's capital budget.

If not addressed, the change by ONS could restrict the development of new affordable social housing and restrict our own ability to fund other capital infrastructure projects. The Welsh Government's bill proposes to reform central and local government controls over RSLs, enabling the ONS to reconsider the reclassification and return them to the private sector.

The government is also seeking cross-party support for legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment, and will consult on proposals with the intention of introducing a bill in the 3rd year of this Assembly term.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“The bills we intend to introduce during the 2nd year of this Assembly will support our efforts to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning and united and connected.

“The 5 bills will tackle harmful alcohol consumption, help support working parents, protect tenants from unfair fees and reform and improve local government.

“Last week the UK government set out its legislative intentions in the Queen’s Speech. While wholly unambitious, the statement included the Repeal Bill and other Brexit-related bills.

“As I have repeatedly made clear, the UK government must respect the devolution settlement. If this does not happen, we will consider other options, such as a Continuity bill, to protect Wales’ interests.

“Leaving the European Union will have a significant impact on the business of this Welsh Government and National Assembly. It would be naive to assume that it will not also have an impact on our own legislative programme – but, we will do all we can to keep driving forward progress and delivering for the people of Wales.”

Bill to introduce landfill disposals tax in Wales is passed

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is the third of three Bills to establish tax arrangements in Wales.

Landfill disposals tax, which will replace landfill tax in Wales, will come into effect in April 2018. The revenue raised will help fund public services in Wales.

Landfill disposals tax – similar to the current landfill tax, which is collected throughout Wales and England – will be a tax on the disposal of waste to landfill. It will be paid by landfill site operators who pass these costs on to waste operators.

The Bill extends the application of landfill disposals tax to unauthorised disposals of waste. This will introduce a financial deterrent to discourage people from disposing of waste unlawfully, encouraging them to pay their fair share of tax by disposing of waste at a registered landfill site.

There are currently 25 landfill sites in Wales, operated by 20 landfill site

operators. In Wales, the Office for Budgetary Responsibility forecasts that landfill tax will generate £25m in 2018-19.

The Finance Secretary will announce the rates for landfill disposals tax by October 1 and the regulations will be laid after the UK Autumn Budget.

Local communities affected by the disposal of waste to landfill will benefit from a new grant-funded scheme in Wales – the Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme, which will be introduced in April 2018.

Welcoming the passing of the Bill by the National Assembly, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“ This Bill is the third piece of legislation to establish tax arrangements in Wales and another important step in our devolution journey.

“In less than a year’s time, we will be introducing the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years and Wales will become responsible for raising our own money to spend on public services.

“Once law, this Bill will enable us to introduce a tax on landfill disposals in Wales from April 2018. The Bill ensures public services in Wales will continue to benefit from the revenues raised by this tax.

“Wales is at the forefront of waste policy and landfill disposals tax is an important element of achieving our goal of a zero waste Wales.

“ We have worked closely with stakeholders in developing this Bill. While it is broadly consistent with the existing landfill tax, therefore providing stability to businesses and minimising the risk of waste tourism, we have made a number of improvements to the tax.

“It is simple and clear to apply; addresses areas of confusion and uncertainty; is up to date and relevant to Wales. Together with the other tax legislation we have introduced it will pave the way to a smooth transition to tax powers.”

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is anticipated to receive Royal Assent in the summer.