

Third anniversary of life changing organ donation policy

Three years on, Health Secretary Vaughan Gething has today marked the anniversary by thanking all of those who have given the precious, potentially life-saving gift of an organ.

A soft opt-out system of consent to organ donation means that if a person has not registered a decision to become an organ donor (opted in) or a decision not to become an organ donor (opted out), they will be considered as having no objection to being an organ donor – this is known as deemed consent.

Data released last month showed for the first time, a significant increase in the donation after brain stem death (DBD) consent rates in Wales (88.2%) when compared to England (73.3%). The donation after circulatory death (DCD) consent rate in Wales has also improved and is now 68% compared to England 59.8%.

Organ donation consent rates in Wales are now the highest in the UK.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said: “We were the first UK nation to take the bold step to adopt a soft opt-out system of consent to organ donation in Wales.

“We made the right decision and three years on we are not only seeing other countries looking to follow our lead, but our organ donation consent rates in Wales are now the highest in the UK.

“None of what we have achieved would have been possible without the support of the Welsh population and the healthcare professionals involved in making this a success. I thank them all for their support over the last three years.

“Despite our success there’s still more to be done. It is not acceptable that people are still dying while waiting for a transplant.

“Communicating your organ donation wishes to family and loved ones is crucial. We see from the NHSBT figures that there were a number of cases where families have overridden their relatives’ decision on the organ donor register, or not supported deemed consent.

“I urge everyone to take a moment and have a conversation about their organ donation decision; every organ donation is an invaluable, potentially life-giving gift.”

Minister confirms £15m investment to support carers and adults with care needs

The Minister made the announcement to mark Carers Rights Day – reaffirming the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting the 370,000 people in Wales who have a caring responsibility. Carers provide 96% of the care in the communities across Wales, contributing more than £8.1bn to the Welsh economy every year.

The additional £15m funding announced today will help increase joint working between local authorities and health boards to support adults with care needs in their homes, avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions, or ensuring they can return as soon as possible after hospital admission. This will help to reduce delayed transfers of care, freeing up hospital resources.

For carers, it will bolster progress on delivering the three National Priorities for Carers – supporting life alongside caring; identifying and recognising carers; and providing information, advice and support.

The Welsh Government is currently investigating ways to improve the quality and appropriateness of respite support for carers, including the types and frequency of respite and other support across Wales. Additional funding will enable public and third sector organisations to make progress on this agenda.

The funding will be allocated to regional partnership boards.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“I’m pleased to be able to announce an additional £15m investment in preventative services that support adults with care needs. In particular, this investment will help develop services that support adults who need support to remain independent in their own homes, which will help keep people out of hospital.

“To mark Carers Rights Day, I also want to say thank you to the huge number of unpaid carers across Wales. Their selfless contribution makes an incredibly invaluable difference to those they care for, their families, and the wider community.

“To support them, I’m pleased to confirm that we’ll be investing part of the £15m to improve support for carers – in particular, respite services, so that carers are able to take a break, supporting them as carers and in their life alongside caring.”

The funding is part of an additional £30m which has been allocated to Regional Partnership Boards to help strengthen integrated working, announced in the Draft Budget 2019-20 by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford.

A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care makes clear that regional partnership boards will be the bodies responsible for developing new models of seamless health and social care.

This funding is in addition to the £100m Transformation funding over two years, which has been made available to support the introduction of new models of care to deliver the objectives of the plan.

Ministers accept Children's Commissioner annual report recommendations

The Children's Commissioner for Wales, Professor Sally Holland, published her 2017-18 Annual Report on 1 October. The Report sets out the work undertaken by her office during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

In her report, the Commissioner highlighted some of the areas where the Welsh Government has made significant progress. This includes improving independent advocacy for children and young people and taking forward proposals to remove the defence of reasonable punishment.

The Commissioner's Annual Report includes 15 recommendations for the Welsh Government and cover a wide range of areas, including health, education, children's services and transport.

Ministers have either accepted or accepted in principle all of the recommendations put forward in the report.

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones said:

“I welcome the Children's Commissioner's annual report for 2017-18. In a period of such momentous change, the Welsh Government remains committed to upholding the rights of children and young people and to listening to and taking account of their views about decisions that affect them.

“We share the Children's Commissioner's vision that children and young people should be at the heart of everything we do, whether that is policy, programmes or legislation.

“Throughout my time as First Minister, the Welsh Government has been fully committed to making a positive difference to the health, well-being, educational outcomes and future prospects for all children and young people in Wales. This approach will ensure children and young people in Wales have the best possible start in life and go on to fulfil their potential.”

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“I am pleased that as a Government we were able to accept or accept in principle all of the Commissioner’s recommendations. This demonstrates how seriously children’s rights are being taken across the Welsh Government. We continue to share a common goal with the Commissioner of ensuring children are at the heart of all that we do.

“We recognise the tireless work the Commissioner has undertaken throughout the year on behalf of the children and young people of Wales. The Commissioner’s work, in giving children and young people a voice and advocating on their behalf, is vital to safeguarding and promoting their rights and welfare.

“As a Government we have, and will continue to, work with the Commissioner and others for the benefit of children and young people in Wales.”

Bringing investors and tourism projects together for accelerated growth

Local Authorities with projects ready for investment attended the conference as an opportunity to showcase their projects to a range of potential investors.

Conference delegates also heard the experiences of high profile investors in Wales including Celtic Manor & International Conference Centre; Aston Martin and Surf Snowdonia, with Scott Quinnell as the key note speaker for the day.

The Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas attended the conference and said:

“Wales is undergoing a transformation in terms of the quality of

its tourism offer, and whilst the Welsh Government is able to provide support where there is market failure it is also imperative that we attract investor confidence in Wales' tourism sector, in order to ensure that we deliver on long term growth of the sector – so that Wales is able to compete in a global market place.

Collaboration is key to economic growth and I hope that today has provided some exciting opportunities for future partnerships."

Andrew Renouf Director of GVA, addressed delegates and gave an overview of the market in Wales. He said:

"It is great to see a buoyant and growing tourism sector in Wales, but there is work still to do to raise the profile of the offer, attract more overseas visitors and mitigate seasonality and geographical disparity.

Today was an important step in showcasing some major development opportunities to investors, and GVA were delighted to have a role to play. The future for Welsh tourism looks bright and the interest shown today from developers and investors is very encouraging."

Taking the opportunity to showcase the developments ready for investment in Cardiff was Cardiff Council. Jonathan Day, Cardiff Council Economic Policy Manager, said:

"Wales is a unique destination and has distinct offer for visitors, from its spectacular countryside, a thriving cultural scene, ancient heritage and progressive cities. Cardiff, as a gateway to much of Wales, and the fastest growing major UK city is the Capital at the centre of that story.

With a focus on regenerating the city centre as international hub for commerce and industry and the bay as a leading UK urban recreation and cultural destination.

We are confident the market for business and leisure visitors will continue to expand in coming years, building on the £1.3bn already spent annually by tourists in the city by the 22 million visitors."

New plan to tackle roadside air

pollution in Wales

The [document](#) sets out action the Welsh Government is taking on five sites on the Welsh Government Managed Road Network and in two Welsh local authority areas. The actions are designed to achieve legal limits for NO₂ within the shortest possible time and, most importantly, protect public health.

Temporary 50 mph speed limits were introduced in June at the five sections of the Motorway and Trunk Road Network which exceed legal limits. The plan proposes to make these speed limits permanent, along with the introduction of variable diversion routes in Newport. The speed limits and diversion will be subject to review periodically.

The Welsh Government has placed a Direction on Cardiff and Caerphilly Councils to undertake an assessment by 30 June 2019 to identify the best option to achieve statutory NO₂ limit values within the shortest possible time. The Welsh Government has also allocated £20 million towards supporting the two local authorities to achieve compliance.

The Welsh Government will be publishing a Clean Air Plan for Wales next year which will identify key pollutants, their effects on public health and the natural environment in Wales and what actions needs to be taken to improve air quality.

Environment Minister, Hannah Blythyn, said:

“Everyone in Wales has the right to clean air. We are working actively, alongside the other UK nations, to transform our most polluted towns and cities into clean and healthy urban spaces.

“While the focus of this plan is to reduce concentrations of NO₂ around roads where exceedances have been identified, we are developing a range of other measures to improve air quality. We are committed to making improvements to air quality in Wales through planning, infrastructure, regulation and health communication measures.”

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, said:

“To deliver immediate improvements to air quality, temporary 50 mph speed limits were introduced at the five sections of the Motorway and Trunk Road Network until the outcome of the further work was known.

“It’s important to remember an estimated 23,500 deaths are caused in the UK each year by long-term nitrogen dioxide exposure. We must therefore ensure action is taken to not only meet our legal obligations but, most importantly, provide the right conditions for

better health and well-being."