

New bond powers for infrastructure investment

The new powers, part of the 2015 St David's Day Agreement, enable the Welsh Government to issue redeemable bonds to fund projects such as schools, hospitals, roads and public transport.

They increase the range of borrowing options available to the Welsh Government.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“At a time when our capital budgets are continuing to fall, these additional powers provide us with the full suite of borrowing levers so we can continue to invest in our ambitious infrastructure plans for the whole of Wales.

“We will always use least expensive forms of capital first when investing in infrastructure before using other sources of repayable capital, such as bonds.”

The bonds – in common with other forms of borrowing – must be repaid with interest and will have an impact on the revenue available to the Welsh Government to fund day-to-day public services.

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.

[Consultation aims to strengthen](#)

support for autistic people in Wales

The consultation proposes a new Code of Practice to strengthen support for autistic people and their families and carers. It will set out the requirements placed on public authorities in the following areas.

- Arrangements for assessment and diagnosis
- Arrangements for accessing care and support
- Arrangements for awareness raising and training
- Arrangements for planning, monitoring and stakeholder involvement

The consultation aims to ensure local health boards and local authorities and their partners understand their existing duties to provide needs based services, including support for carers.

Visit: [Code of practice on the delivery of autism services](#)

Vaughan Gething said:

“We have made a firm commitment to improve autism services here in Wales.

“We listened when we were told that despite progress, some autistic people and their families and carers were still struggling to access the support they need. We renewed our national plan in 2016 which ensured we had in place a needs based approach to the development and provision of autism services.

“We also put in place a National Integrated Autism Service which is available in five regions in Wales and will be available in Western Bay and West Wales this financial year. At the same time we made significant investment in neurodevelopmental services for children and young people to improve assessment and diagnostic waiting times.

“Crucially, through existing legislation, the Code we will put in place will have strong powers enabling Welsh Ministers to take action to intervene where services do not meet satisfactory standards.

“This includes ensuring staff training, compliance with requirements to undertake assessments in a timely manner and to collect data as required. We will require local authorities and health boards to consider autism as a stand alone key theme when undertaking future population needs assessments, to be published in local area plans.

“The publication of this consultation document takes place at a time when there is significant discussion and debate about autism specific legislation in Wales.

“It is not additional legislation which is needed to make faster progress, but rather effective implementation of existing legislation and the new plans and services that are currently being put into place. The Code we are consulting on is key to guiding this.

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.”