[Save a Life Cymru to create a life-saving chain of survival across Wales]

Called Save a Life Cymru, the project which will be developed over the next two years, will improve access to cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and increase the awareness and use of defibrillators for people from all walks of life.

As more people learn CPR, they will be encouraged to share their knowledge, strengthening the chain of survival that will help improve survival rates for people suffering a cardiac arrest.

Welsh Government will provide funding totalling £586,000 for the first two years of the project.

Vaughan Gething said:

> “It is a sad fact that a patient’s chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest decreases by an estimated 10% with every passing minute. Survival rates are low but there is the potential for many more lives to be saved through prompt and effective CPR and use of a defibrillator.
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> “Save a Life Cymru will actively target and support groups who are already teaching CPR within their communities. It will help them to build local networks, identifying communities across Wales who have less CPR training opportunities, helping them share their knowledge and skills. This will strengthen the chain of survival and build local community resilience.
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> “This work will build on the sterling efforts already made by the Welsh Ambulance Service to teach CPR in schools – last October during the ‘Shoctober’ and ‘Restart a Heart’ campaigns, nearly 13,000 schoolchildren were taught CPR.
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> “Learning from the excellent example of Scotland as well as initiatives in other parts of the world, Save a Life Cymru will lead the work improving access to CPR training and defibrillation. We are inviting all third sector, public and other organisations with an interest to become a member of the partnership and work with us to lay the foundation for building lifesaving activity across the country.
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> “The more people aware of CPR, and confident to use it in a life or death situation, the more lives will be saved. That’s why setting up the Save a Life Cymru partnership is so important.”

Welsh Government continues to deliver improvements for Wales – First Minister

Last September, the Welsh Government published its national strategy, Prosperity for All, setting out its ambitious programme for government and priorities for delivering for the people of Wales.

6 priority areas have been identified for cross-government action:

- early years
- housing
- social care
- better mental health
- skills and employability
- decarbonisation.

Together, these 6 areas reflect the support people need throughout their lives and where, if the right help is provided, dramatic improvements can be made to their life course.

The Welsh Government has published its Annual Report, setting out the progress it is making made towards delivering its commitments to the people of Wales.

One of these commitments is to provide 20,000 more affordable homes, a target that the Welsh Government has made significant progress on in the past year.

To hear more about how Welsh Government's support for house builders has helped keep it on track to meet this ambitious target, the First Minister visited the Tonyrefail site of Lewis Homes, which is providing a mix of market housing, much of which is supported by our Help to Buy – Wales scheme, and affordable housing.

Lewis Homes have benefited from loans from the Development Bank for Wales through the Property Development Fund, which have allowed the company to expand its plans to build new homes across a number of sites, and increase its workforce.

Speaking during the visit, the First Minister said:

> "Lewis Homes is an excellent example of where our commitment to supporting business is helping them to grow and bringing added benefits to our communities, from creating job opportunities to providing a better choice of affordable homes right across Wales."

The First Minister added:

> "Throughout my time as First Minister I have been open about the progress we are making as a government. I am proud to say we have never been afraid to make the choices that are right for the people of Wales, even when that means taking a different approach to others.
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> "We've delivered improvements despite a decade of cuts from the UK government. We recognise that in the face of austerity people need support more than ever, and as a result have set out priorities that will not only deliver improvements that directly impact the lives of people today, but are laying the foundations for longer-term benefits that will be felt well-beyond this government term."

Progress in the past year includes:

- delivering the £80 million New Treatment Fund, to allow people everywhere in Wales can have the same fast access to new drugs and treatments
- prioritising school spending to remain on track to invest £100 million to improve schools' performance
- increasing the amount of money people can keep before they have to fund the full cost of their residential care to £40,000
- increasing spending on mental health services by a further £20 million to nearly £650 million
- delivering tax cuts for small businesses through our High Street Rates Relief Scheme.

The Director of Lewis Homes, Ifan Glyn, said:

> "To build the homes that our communities require, it is vital that small house builders are provided the appropriate support to thrive. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) has been working closely with the Welsh Government to develop some of these support streams. There is plenty of work still to do, but we have already seen some positive government interventions taking place over recent years.
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> "One such example is the Property Development Fund, administered by the Development Bank of Wales. Access to finance became a major barrier to small developers post-recession as traditional lenders virtually ceased loaning to small building firms. This Welsh Government intervention provided many with a lifeline and FMB members throughout Wales have been able to make use of it to build homes that would not have otherwise been built."

Funding for local government announced

Local authorities in Wales will receive £4.2bn in core revenue funding and non-domestic rates next year to spend on delivering key services. This includes £2.5m of floor funding to ensure that no authority has to manage with a reduction of more than 1.0%.

In recognition of the important role local authorities play in delivering core social services and the preventative approach at the heart of delivery, this settlement contains a further £20m to help ease those pressures.

We have also provided funding for additional costs arising from changes by the UK Government to teachers' pay, as well as funding for our proposals for new eligibility criteria for free school meals in light of the continued rollout of Universal Credit by the UK Government.

In addition, we are providing £60m capital funding over three years for a local authority road refurbishment scheme to help repair the damage caused by a series of hard winters and this summer's heatwave and access to the £78m local transport fund.

Alun Davies said:

> "Last week we set out the context for this year's local government settlement – the uncertainty surrounding the arrangements for leaving the EU, the forthcoming UK Autumn Budget and the UK Government's planned Spending Review in 2019, as well as the continuing constraints on public spending. All of these factors form the backdrop for local authorities' own budget-setting processes for the coming financial year.
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> "After the announcement of the final Budget last year, authorities were facing the prospect of a 1.0% reduction in core funding for 2019-20, equivalent to a £43m reduction in cash terms.
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> "We have worked hard, across government, to offer local government the best settlement possible in this ninth year of austerity. We have made further allocations to the local government settlement to mitigate most of the reduction local government had been expecting. As a result, the £43m cut has been reduced to less than £13m, including floor funding, which equates to a reduction of 0.3% on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year.
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> "The draft Budget last week also included a series of additional grants for local government, including £30m for social care and £15m for education and the restoration of other funding streams where cuts had previously been announced.

> “While we have worked hard to offer local government the best settlement possible, we recognise this settlement is a real terms cut in core funding, at a time when authorities face real pressures from an increase in demand from an ageing population; pay awards and other inflationary pressures.
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> “As we have made clear in discussions with our colleagues in local government, we recognise the pressures they are facing and will continue to do all we can to shield them from the worst effects of austerity.
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> “The UK Government will publish its Budget on 29 October. In the event of additional funding being made available to Wales, local government will be a key priority for that funding.”

Benchmarking project to help red meat sector prepare for Brexit gets underway

The Red Meat Benchmarking project (external link), supported through the Welsh Government’s EU Transition Fund, will support 2,000 farmers to better understand the technical and financial performance of their business and ensure their competitiveness in a changing market.

The project is managed by Hybu Cig Cymru enabling farmers to input their business data from today. The project will remain open for two months, closing on 10 December.

Eligible producers across Wales are being encouraged to participate on a first come first served basis by completing the online questionnaire on the financial and physical performance of their business from the 2016-7 or 2017-8 financial years.

In return, participating farmers will receive a bespoke assessment of their business and productivity which will include anonymous comparisons with similar businesses within the sector. Participating farmers will also receive a compensatory payment of £1,000 for the time and effort of taking part.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

> “It is now less than six months before the UK leaves the European Union and the prospect of a no deal looms large. The need to

prepare for a post-Brexit world has never been more essential.

"As a Government, we have always said we will do all we can to support our agricultural sector to help them prepare and adapt to the challenges and opportunities Brexit presents. Earlier this year I announced a £2.15m new red meat benchmarking project to help beef and sheep farmers do just that.

"Building on the successful work of our Dairy Conditional project, the system will support two thousand beef and sheep farmers benchmark their financial and technical performance and identify areas of their business which could be improved.

"From today beef and sheep farmers can input their data and in return receive a bespoke assessment report on their business. This system will remain open for two months and I urge all eligible producers to find out more and take part in the project.

"This is crucial investment for the sector at this difficult and challenging time. It will enable beef and sheep farmers to maintain their competitiveness in changing markets, maximise any emerging opportunities and ensure they are able to thrive in a post-Brexit world."

Hybu Cig Cymru's Industry Development Manager, John Richards said:

"This is a red meat producer's opportunity to step back, assess the financial status of their business and take a really good look at how it's performing. With Brexit just around the corner, it is crucially important that our businesses are financially fit. Now's the time for our sector to raise its game and contribute towards the bigger picture.

"There will be direct benefits for farmers who take time to participate in the project; they will be equipped with knowledge and information to make informed changes to their businesses, leading to improved productivity and efficiency. This could result in more confident and competitive businesses in the future."

Countdown to journey for improved rail services for Welsh passengers

Some of the improvements, which will bring about a transformation in rail travel for people and communities the length and breadth of Wales and its borders, will be immediate, including a new customer website and app, new branding appearing across the network and enhanced Welsh language service provision – while other will be introduced as soon as possible.

These include plans to spend £194m on station improvements, including the building of five new stations, and the deep cleaning of stations from this December.

Ken Skates said:

> "Our plans go beyond a traditional transport project – they have to become the spark for wider economic renewal. They have to help individuals, businesses and communities who need a reliable, integrated transport system to help them find a new job, support their business to expand, and bring new investment to their town.
>
> The Metro project is not only about dealing with today's transport problems, but how we provide opportunities for the future –and not just in transport terms, but the impact that the Metro infrastructure will have on economic possibilities for people throughout south Wales."

Other major benefits of the new Wales and Borders rail contract include:

- An additional 600 staff will be recruited to deliver the service in a range of roles and 450 new apprenticeships (30 every year) will also be created over the life of the contract.
- £1.9 billion will be invested in improving passengers' travel experience, including an £800 million investment in trains, boosting overall service capacity by 65 per cent.
- By 2023 95 per cent of journeys will be on a 148 brand new trains, half of which will be assembled in Wales.
- The Central Metro will be operated by 100 per cent electric traction, with the electricity sourced from 100 per cent renewable sources, 50 per cent of which will be sourced in Wales.
- By the end of 2023, passengers will be able to take advantage of an additional 285 services each weekday across Wales (a 29 per cent increase). This will include improvements to the Ebbw Vale and Wrexham – Bidston lines as well as the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.
- From December 2022 there will be a 28 per cent increase in Sunday mileage, creating a true seven-day-a-week service.

Smart ticketing will ensure that fares are more flexible and cheaper off-peak fares will be introduced including fare reductions in North Wales and at approximately 50 per cent of stations in the valleys.

Part of the new contract includes the delivery of the next phase of the £738million South Wales Metro project, and the first £119m of that was announced by First Minister Carwyn Jones at the end of last week.

Speaking at the ‘Metro and Me’ conference for business leaders today (Monday 8th October), Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford brought delegates up to speed on developments, saying:

> “Our plans go beyond a traditional transport project. The Metro will deliver against a range of our policy objectives by creating a network that will serve communities, accessible to all and operating seven days a week.
>
> It will increase social mobility and widen access, connecting people and communities to employment opportunities, and education, health and leisure facilities.”