

Mike Hedges

Member of the Senedd for Swansea East

SENEDD REPORT – April 23

Welsh Labour  Llafur Cymru



Mike Hedges, MS for Swansea East, focuses on eye health after launch of new contract for Optometrists in Wales

As part of activity surrounding the launch of a new contract service that will see optometrists being able to deliver more local eye care, Mike Hedges, Member of the Senedd for Swansea East, visited local optometric practice Stephen Evans Optometrists, located in SA1 Swansea.

Dispensing Optician and Practice Manager Henry Evans says, 'Regular eye examinations are an important health check-up and can play a vital role in the detection of various health conditions such as glaucoma and macular degeneration'.

(EMA) increased in Wales

On 17th April 2023 we succeeded in getting Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) increased in Wales. It was a long battle involving questions, a statement of opinion which had only seven supporters and a Member debate in the Senedd to get it increased.

Sixth form and college students from low income households will now receive a £10 grant increase to help with travel and food costs, the Welsh government has announced.

EMA had been frozen at £30 for nearly 20 years. The new higher payment is available from the beginning of the summer term. The challenge now is to get it indexed-linked as other means-tested payments are.

I want to highlight firstly the importance of EMA and secondly the importance of increasing it in line with inflation. I would like to go through some details from my experience as a college lecturer. Without EMA, many students would not have been able to undertake their studies. Many more, driven by their family's economic circumstances, would, at some stage, have had to drop out.

Many of my former students ended up in well-paid ICT jobs, helping both them and the economy. EMA was the difference between unemployment followed by low-skilled and low-paid employment and becoming skilled and well paid. EMA was and is life-changing for many people.

It also benefits our economy, increasing the number of skilled workers. This is investing in young people, investing in our economy and it is one of the best forms of investment in economic development. Contrast this with bribing companies to bring their branch factories to Wales, which has failed for as long as I can remember – just think about Bosch and LG.

My experience as a college lecturer was that any student who attended regularly or who had a good reason for not being there and who was making good progress was not going to be stopped getting their EMA. The Bevan Foundation estimate the cost of an inflation-linked increase will be around £1.7 million. Raising the eligibility to include another 1,000 students would cost £1.1 million. This is obviously affordable from the Welsh Government budget. The Finance Committee discussed this and were unanimously in favour of such an uplift, including the Tory member.

SWANSEA EAST MS WELCOMES NEWS THAT FLYING START WILL BE EXPANDED

Swansea East MS Mike Hedges said.... I greatly welcome the news that flying start will be expanded. I have long been a supporter of Flying Start, and believe that all children in Wales should be able to access early years learning opportunities along with the family support offered by Flying Start. I understand that this expansion of the scheme we'll see an additional 2600 children benefiting from the scheme, and that is welcome news.

The *Programme for Government* commits to continue support for the Flying Start programme. The Welsh government have also extended this to deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds.

The first phase began in September 2022 and we have already passed its target. All four elements of the Flying Start programme – enhanced health visiting, support for speech, language and communication, parenting support and childcare – are available to more than 2,600 additional children.

The Government are now focusing on the next phase of expansion – delivering the childcare element of Flying Start to even more two-year-olds across Wales.

Surgeries

Morrison library
Clwyd school
97 Pleasant street
Plasmarl school
St Thomas library
Llansamlet library

Speeches

Flooding
Levelling up

Questions

Microchipping cats
Leasehold
Welsh economy

Articles

Co-operative housing pamphlet
3rd April Welsh Fabians prepayment meters
5th April Nation Cymru – public funds for tourism
6th April Bevan foundation remote access to services
12th April- Your mag rare diseases day
18th April Labour Hub- EMA
19th April- Nation Cymru EMA

Visits

Stephen Evans
Optometry
Community aid concert - Tabernacle Morrison Barod
Swansea Stoke group
SA1 waterfront meeting
Clase for all sustainability workshop
Ynystawe school
Morrison Primary school
Burlais school

Sport attended

Birchgrove v Bonymaen rugby
Bonymaen Rugby
Morrison rufby
Blaeymaes v Plough football
Penlan football
Morrison football
Wern v CRC Olympic
Swansea tennis centre
Morrison v
Mynyddbach bowls

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WATERFRONT EVENT –I was pleased to attend an event in SA1 to meet local business and talk to them about my role as a Senedd Member. I chatted about the work I have done at the Senedd regarding getting the roads in SA1 adopted and work I have done regarding Buildings in SA1 which have cladding which needs to be replaced. I also spoke of promoting Swansea University and their links with local business, some of whom were at the event.



Get in touch

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May Surgeries

5 May Brynhyfryd Library 3-4 pm
12 May Morrison Library 3-4pm
19 May Penlan Library- 2-3 pm
25 May St Thomas Library 3-3.30 pm
26 May Llansamlet Library 3 -4 pm