

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 10 November 2004

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

Contents

- 1 Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
- 3 Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Simvastatin

Q7 Brian Gibbons: Will the Minister make a statement on the over-the-counter availability of Simvastatin? (OAQ39150)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): The availability of over-the-counter medicines is not devolved to the Assembly but is the responsibility of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Simvastatin, a cholesterol lowering drug, is available at a relatively low dose from pharmacists who are professionally qualified and who can ensure that the drug is sold appropriately.

Supporting Cancer Research

Q8 Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to support cancer research in Wales? (OAQ39126)

Jane Hutt: The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to cancer research and supports several major initiatives such as the Wales cancer bank, the Wales cancer trials network and the Wales gene park. In addition, the Assembly supports a number of smaller cancer research grants and contributes to the national prevention research initiative.

Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Health and Wellbeing

Q9 Ann Jones: When does the Minister anticipate launching the consultation on the draft arthritis and musculoskeletal health and wellbeing policy and action plan for Wales? (OAQ39107)

Jane Hutt: The production of a final draft for consultation is planned for the end of this year, with completion of the final document by March 2005.

Dental Services in Alyn and Deeside

Q10 Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement regarding dental services in Alyn and Deeside? (OAQ39138)

Jane Hutt: I recently announced £5.3 million over the next three years to improve access to NHS dentistry and support the implementation of the new dental contract and associated reforms. Flintshire Local Health Board was one of six LHBs allocated £85,000 on a recurring basis after being identified as an area requiring additional assistance to improve access to NHS dentistry.

MRSA

Q11 Jenny Randerson: Will the Minister make a statement on comparable levels of MRSA across Wales? (OAQ39165)

Jane Hutt: As part of the existing bacteraemia reporting scheme, data on all infections is routinely collected from all trusts in Wales and published on the National Public Health Service website. They collect a range of useful data, which include information on rates of MRSA. Trusts have used this as a vehicle to identify issues and to drive improvement. The latest data published by the NPHS show that the highest rate in Wales is half that of the highest rate in England.

Children's Dental Health

Q12 William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on child dental health in Wales? (OAQ39149)

Jane Hutt: The Assembly Government is investing considerable sums of money into initiatives and schemes to improve the dental health of our young children. It is important that children and their families adopt healthy lifestyle practices, such as a balanced diet and regular tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste. Encouraging good health at a young age will prevent oral health problems in later life.

The Matron's Charter

Q13 William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the introduction of the matron's charter? (OAQ39148)

Jane Hutt: Hospital hygiene is being monitored by teams that include community health council representatives, and findings are discussed directly with the trust concerned. 'Healthcare Associated Infections—A Strategy for Hospitals in Wales' was launched on 9 September 2004, which, again, places responsibility on all staff to ensure that good infection control procedures are in place.

Take-up of Digital Hearing Aids

Q14 Ann Jones: Further to the Ministers answer to OAQ38027, can the Minister detail the take-up of digital hearing aids in each of the three NHS Wales regions? (OAQ39106)

Jane Hutt: The collection of statistics regarding the monthly issue of digital hearing aids to patients on an NHS trust-by-trust basis first began in July 2003. At that time, approximately 15,000 digital hearing aids had been issued across Wales.

For the period of July 2003 to September 2004, the following number of digital hearing aids were issued by NHS trusts within each NHS Wales region:

North Wales Region	9,241*
Mid and West Wales Region	10,119*
South and East Wales Region	13,881*

This means that over 48,000 patients in the past two years have benefited from a new digital hearing aid.

* Information collected directly by the Welsh Assembly Government from individual NHS trusts

Training and Retaining Midwives in North Wales

Q15 Brynle Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the training and retention of midwives in north Wales? (OAQ39109)

Jane Hutt: At September 2002, there were 280.19 whole-time equivalent midwives in post in the three north Wales trusts. At September 2003, some 6.3 per cent of midwives left these trusts, but over a third of these have remained in NHS Wales. During the same period, the numbers of midwives had increased to 299.15 WTE. There are currently no vacant midwifery posts in north Wales. The University of Wales Bangor is currently developing a three-year midwifery degree course to commence within two years, widening the opportunity for non-nurses to become midwives. Midwifery training places at Bangor have been increased from 14 in 1999-2000 to 18 in 2004-05.

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Cyllideb Portffolio Diwylliant

C10 Ieuan Wyn Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar gyllideb y portffolio diwylliant? (OAQ39178) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, Y Gymraeg a Chwaraeon (Alun Pugh): Mae'r gyllideb ddrafft ar gyfer y tair blynedd nesaf yn un dda ar gyfer fy mhorthffolio. Bydd yn ein galluogi i gyflawni yn llwyr ein hymrwymadau yn 'Iaith Pawb', cymryd cam arall i wella mynediad i ddiwylliant a hefyd gynyddu cyfranogiad cyffredin o ymarfer corff drwy ddyblu cyllid chwaraeon dros dair blynedd.

The Culture Portfolio Budget

Q10 Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the culture portfolio budget? (OAQ39178) [W]

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): The draft budget for the next three years is a good one for my portfolio. It will enable us to meet fully our commitments in 'Iaith Pawb', make further inroads into improving access to culture and increase widespread participation in physical activity by doubling funding for sport over three years.

Wales's Representation on Ofcom

Q11 Michael German: What progress is the Minister making to ensure a strong voice and representation for Wales on Ofcom? (OAQ39078)

Alun Pugh: The Communications Act 2003 includes provisions to ensure Welsh representation within the Office of Communications. However, the Welsh Assembly Government will also continue to represent Welsh interests in relation to broadcasting and will make its views known to Ofcom at every available opportunity.

Successes in the Paralympic Games

Q12 Brian Gibbons: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government plans to build upon the successes of Welsh athletes in the Paralympics? (OAQ39185)

Alun Pugh: The Sports Council for Wales, which is sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government, has extended its partnership with the Federation of Disability Sport Wales to ensure that it can build on the

successes of Athens by supporting talented disabled competitors through a wide range of talent identification and development programmes.

Freeview Access

Q13 Huw Lewis: Will the Minister make a statement on the Assembly Government's position on ensuring Freeview access to all households in Wales? (OAQ39089)

Alun Pugh: Broadcasting is not devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is however in regular discussion with the UK Government and with Ofcom in relation to broadcasting issues, including access to free-to-view digital television.

English-language Theatre

Q14 David Melding: Will the Minister make a statement on English-language theatre in Wales? (OAQ39097)

Alun Pugh: The consultation period for the Peter Boyden report on the review of English-language theatre ended on 22 October 2004. I will be considering further strategic approaches to the development of English-language theatre in Wales in the light of the consultation responses.

The Future of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies

Q15 Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of ASPBs that fall within his portfolio? (OAQ39079)

Alun Pugh: We are presently reviewing the status of the cultural ASPBs as part of our programme of quango reform. We are carefully considering the issues raised by each of the bodies in their submissions to the review. The First Minister has made clear that final decisions will be made by the end of November.