

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 15 January 2003

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

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

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Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Amseroedd Aros o fewn y GIG

C10 Cynog Dafis: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar amseroedd aros o fewn y GIG? (OAQ21750) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol (Jane Hutt): Ers i mi wneud cyhoeddiad ym mis Gorffennaf 2001 ynghylch strategaeth newydd ar amseroedd aros, mae cryn fuddsoddiad wedi'i wneud er mwyn gostwng amseroedd aros. Yr ydym wedi gweld gwelliannau yn y meysydd y rhoddir blaenoriaeth iddynt, sef llawdriniaeth ar y galon ac orthopedeg. Yr ydym am weld y gwelliant hwn ym mhob maes, ac mae'r tîm arloesi mewn gofal yn cynorthwyo'r gwasanaeth iechyd gwladol i foderneiddio'r ffordd y mae'n rheoli ac yn darparu gofal i gleifion.

NHS Waiting Times

Q10 Cynog Dafis: Will the Minister make a statement on NHS waiting times? (OAQ21750)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): Since I announced a new waiting times strategy in July 2001, significant investment has been made in reducing waiting times. We have seen improvements in the priority areas of cardiac surgery and orthopaedics. We want to see this extended to all areas and the innovations in care team is supporting the NHS in modernising the way it manages and delivers patient care.

Reform of the NHS

Q11 Geraint Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on how she will implement the recommendations of Sir John Bourn with regard to the proposed reform of the NHS? (OAQ21724)

Jane Hutt: I am grateful to the Auditor General for Wales for his independent review of the transitional and running cost budgets of the new structures. The review makes a series of helpful recommendations—the implementation of which is already underway—that will ensure that we move forward on a sound basis. I will outline progress in my monthly reports to Committee.

Treatment of Headlice for School Children

Q12 Gwenda Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the effectiveness of the available treatment of headlice for school children? (OAQ21660) [R]

Jane Hutt: A drug information bulletin, 'Head Lice', which has been issued to all health professionals in Wales, lists recommended treatments. A range of proprietary treatments is available to deal with headlice, but it is important that instructions are complied with to obtain the best results.

Dentists' Remuneration

Q13 Janet Davies: Will the Minister give her opinion on the need to revise how dentists are remunerated? (OAQ21738)

Jane Hutt: I am convinced that new methods for paying NHS dentists must be explored, as outlined in 'Routes to Reform: A Strategy for Primary Dental Care in Wales'. Any future system should seek to reward dentists for the high-quality care that they deliver, improve transparency for patients, and provide the flexibility to tackle localised oral health inequalities.

Registering with an NHS Dentist

Q14 Owen John Thomas: How many people in South Wales Central are not registered with an NHS dentist? (OAQ21654)

Jane Hutt: In the Bro Taf Health Authority area, the estimated number of people not registered with an NHS dentist is 346,763 (June 2002).

Working Conditions of NHS Nurses in Wales

Q15 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: What measures will the Minister introduce to improve the working conditions of NHS nurses in Wales? (OAQ21725)

Jane Hutt: The recent recruitment and retention strategy for NHS Wales details the action necessary to improve retention for all health professionals. Where appropriate, this builds on local strategies adopted by trusts. Additionally, the childcare task and finish group is investigating current and future provision of childcare facilities in Wales, and will be making recommendations in due course that should benefit all healthcare staff, including nurses.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Disadvantaged Communities

Q8 John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in supporting schools serving Wales's most disadvantaged communities? (OAQ21716)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): The 'Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools' report demonstrated a correlation between disadvantage and low performance, but also showed that successful schools could break that link. I will be proposing that an element of the £32 million additional revenue funding special grant for 2003-04 be focused on schools in disadvantaged areas. The grants for education support and training programme for 2003-04 will have an enhanced focus on such schools.

Levels of School Funding (South Wales Central)

Q9 David Melding: Will the Minister make a statement on the levels of school funding for schools in South Wales Central? (OAQ21691)

Jane Davidson: The budgets for school services set for 2002-03 by authorities were: Cardiff £155.7 million, Rhondda Cynon Taff £134.1 million and the Vale of Glamorgan £61.7 million. The provisional local government revenue settlement for 2003-04 includes an 8 per cent increase in the Assembly's cash support for councils' revenue costs. It takes account of pay and price pressures on local authority services, including education.

Primary Schools in Rural Areas

Q10 David Davies: What is being done to support primary schools in rural areas? (OAQ21720)

Jane Davidson: We have provided a special grant of £2 million this year to local education authorities to help small and rural schools explore ways of working together and with the local community. Next year, £3.5 million will be available. The grant can also be used to provide administrative support to headteachers who, in small schools, often have heavy teaching commitments as well as management responsibilities.

Children Leaving School without Qualifications (Merthyr Tydfil)

Q11 Huw Lewis: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of children in Merthyr Tydfil leaving school with no qualifications? (OAQ21705)

Jane Davidson: The number of pupils in Wales leaving full-time education without a recognised qualification has dropped steadily in recent years and, as I announced last December, we have now achieved our 2002 target. Merthyr Tydfil made a significant contribution towards that achievement and the authority should be congratulated on reducing the number of pupils in its area leaving school without a recognised qualification from 84 pupils in 2000 to 48 in 2002.

Fires in Schools

Q12 Ann Jones: What was the total cost to the education system resulting from fires in schools in the last year for which figures are available? (OAQ21746)

Jane Davidson: This information is not collected centrally. Such costs are normally covered by insurance.

Modern Fire Sprinkler Systems

Q13 Ann Jones: What assessment has been made of the potential for savings on the cost of fire in schools arising from the installation of modern fire sprinkler systems? (OAQ21745)

Jane Davidson: This is a matter for local education authorities in consultation with local fire authorities as appropriate.

Accidents in Schools

Q14 David Melding: How many accidents requiring hospital treatment occurred in schools during the latest year for which figures are available? (OAQ21677)

Jane Davidson: It is estimated, using data from the all-Wales injury surveillance system, that, on average, 21,000 injuries to children aged five to 16 which occurred in an educational establishment were treated in an accident and emergency or casualty department in Wales, during each of the years 1999 and 2000.

GCSE Results in Wales

Q15 Brian Gibbons: Will the Minister make a statement on the latest year's GCSE results in Wales? (OAQ21693)

Jane Davidson: Overall, the 2002 results were encouraging. We sustained the progress made in recent years and, since 1996, we have improved by 8 percentage points those achieving at least five A* to C

GCSE grades. However, we cannot be complacent and I shall continue to give teachers and pupils the help and support they need to beat their previous best and to continue to improve.