

## **Information Further to Ministerial Answers**

### **Information further to OAQ22769 issued by Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister, on 4 March 2003**

#### **To Janet Davies:**

During Plenary on 4 March 2003 you raised several issues concerning the proposed interim evaluation of the Communities First Programme. I said that I would provide a full written answer.

Six organisations have been invited to tender by 28 March 2003 for the contract to carry out this interim evaluation. They have been invited to do so on the basis of the attached specification that includes at section 5.1 (ii) a requirement for area profiles. The successful contractor will be required to construct 'baseline' profiles of each Communities First area, against which subsequent change can be measured. The intention is that the profiles should provide a current 'snap shot' position and, where possible, information on recent trends or changes in the locality, prior to the invention of Communities First. The local profiles will be supplemented by comparative profiles for Wales as a whole and for the functional regions within which each Communities First areas sits. Section 5.1 (iv) of the specification requires the contractor to assess any displacement effects. It is important that we know the degree to which desired activities generated through the programme in Communities First areas is offset by reductions elsewhere.

While the Communities First programme is planned to run for at least 10 years, there would be practical difficulties in fully specifying, and costing, a research programme of work over this extended period. This is highlighted in section 9.3 of the specification. The contract for this interim evaluation will be let for a period of three years with an option to extend for a further period not exceeding two years. The cost of this three year contract is subject to the tendering process, but an indicative cost of £600,000 to £800,000 has been given in the specification.

Clearly the results of this evaluation will be very important in terms of the further development of the Communities First programme and our wider community regeneration policies. Assembly officials will be working closely with the successful contractor to ensure that findings from the evaluation are disseminated and used as widely as possible.

### **Information further to the supplementary to OAQ22774, issued by the First Minister on 20 March 2003**

#### **To Kirsty Williams:**

In response to your question in the Plenary on 4 March 2003 regarding the implementation of 'Agenda for Change', I am pleased to advise you of the current situation and plans for Wales.

Implementation in 12 early implementer sites in England is due to start in June this year, subject to approval by staff organisations, following a major consultation exercise and individual balloting. Full roll-out in the rest of the UK, including Wales, is planned for October 2004.

In order to ensure effective implementation in Wales, a comprehensive implementation plan and structure is being established. A director of pay modernisation has been appointed and a support team is currently being established. A partnership approach is being utilised

throughout and a project team, including representatives of senior service managers and staff representatives, is also being developed.

A sub-group of the Wales Partnership Forum has already been established and formal links have been forged with the implementation groups in the other three countries to ensure that best practice is shared.

Briefings to senior managers have already begun and further presentations are planned for the coming months. Subject to approval by staff organisations, the new system will then be implemented by a significant amount of awareness training, technical training, project management arrangements, best practice sharing and so on. This will ensure that the full benefits of 'Agenda for Change' are felt by employees, and also the service, in improved patient care.

Staff information booklets giving details of 'Agenda for Change' are shortly to be distributed to all affected national health service staff in Wales.

I am committed to providing full funding to implement 'Agenda for Change'. Derek Wanless, author of the Chancellor's comprehensive review of the future of the NHS, is currently advising on a review of health and social care in Wales. The outcome of the review will be crucial in terms of setting the agenda for NHS and social care reform in Wales. This is the reason why the Assembly's latest budget contains relatively modest increases in the health budget for 2004-05 and 2005-06. The allocation of resources beyond the end of the next financial year will be determined by the outcome of the health and social care review to ensure that investment is matched by reform and delivery.