

Information Further to Ministerial Answers

Information further to OAQ(3)2416(FM) issued by Edwina Hart, the Minister for the Health and Social Services, on 10 December 2009

To Jenny Randerson:

During Questions to the First Minister on 24 November you raised concerns about GP and Pharmacy Services. The First Minister promised that I would write to you regarding the points you made.

You wrote to me on 16 November expressing concerns about the number of General Medical Service practices in Cardiff with lists which are full. In my response I told you that I have written to the Chief Executive of the Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board asking her to write to me with an update on the LHB's plans and actions to address this problem.

In relation to the provision of pharmacy services, enhanced services through the community pharmacy contract are planned and developed by LHBs where appropriate and according to local need. Template specifications for enhanced services have been developed to provide a degree of continuity, although these can be adapted for local use. While LHBs do share knowledge and experience, they have historically developed these services as they see fit, however, the reorganisation of the NHS in Wales will increase the collaborative working and encourage LHBs to develop all Wales approaches to issues such as this.

In addition, as you are aware, my Task and Finish Group on Pharmacy Services has already recommended that enhanced services within the pharmacy contractual framework should be standardised across Wales. I have asked them to progress this work and ensure their recommendations are implemented.

The Task and Finish Group is currently working on this with key stakeholders and the NHS and I am expecting the final report from the Group in December. This work will further enhance our efforts to harness the potential of community pharmacy for improving outcomes for patients and demonstrate the importance of Community Pharmacists as an integral part of health provision.

Information further to OAQ(3)2408(FM) issued by Edwina Hart, the Minister for the Health and Social Services, on 10 December 2009

To Eleanor Burnham:

During Questions to the First Minister on 24 November you raised concerns about the provision of wheelchair services across Wales. The First Minister promised that I would write to you regarding the points you made.

I am concerned about the length of time some patients are waiting for their assessments and their wheelchairs. The provision of wheelchair services falls primarily to the Artificial Limb and Appliance Service (ALAS), which is not an All Wales Service but is based at two centres in Cardiff and Wrexham. A review into the provision of wheelchairs and specialist seating has been under way in Wales.

Senior Welsh Assembly Government officials have been working with health professionals and other key stakeholders and service users to review the current provision, identify any gaps and consider how services can be improved. The first phase of this review has been to assess

the current pathway for provision of wheelchairs (complex and standard) through the ALAS service, and advise on any efficiencies that can be generated to reduce the waiting times.

I issued a written statement on the recommendations from the phase one report which includes specific recommendations covering the referral and assessment pathway, waiting list management policy, staffing including training, the role of rehabilitation engineering and the maintenance and repair service as well as funding and service quality issues. Phase Two of the review which will look to develop specific plans for the service will begin in early 2010. I will make a statement to confirm the direction of Phase Two early in the New Year.

The final budget statement due to be announced shortly will provide additional funding for both adult and paediatric wheelchair services, which will reduce waiting times both for assessment and delivery of wheelchairs.

My first priority will be to tackle long waiting times for children across Wales, and for adults particularly in Mid and North Wales.