

Date: Wednesday 26 March 2003

Venue: Committee Rooms National Assembly for Wales

Title: The Committee's Recommendations on Issues for the Successor Committee to include in its Forward Work Programme

Purpose

1. The Committee is asked to consider making recommendations to its successor committee or committees after the election in May on issues that might be included in a Forward Work Programme.

Background

2. Under Standing Order 9.9 subject committees are required to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The programme should identify topics or matters within the Committee's remit which are for detailed discussion including urgent matters that may arise from time to time.

3. It has become the practice of the subject committees to draw up their forward work programmes in two parts. The first part is the strategic framework setting out the committee's aims for the coming twelve months. This is supplemented by a detailed programme of work for the coming three to four months.

Suggested Recommendations

4. The Committee is invited to consider the following as issues to be included in a paper for the current Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee to send her successor.

Strategic Framework

5. The restructuring of the NHS in Wales will be implemented from 1 April and monitoring its implementation and effectiveness should be the foundation stone on which the new Committee should develop its programme. There are related issues such as the review supported by Derek Wanless. Mr

Wanless is due to report to the Welsh Assembly Government in the late Spring on how resources for health and social care can be translated into reform and improved performance. Another allied strategic issue is the measures to reduce hospital waiting times and allied pressures. The interface between health and social care and joint planning and working between the agencies are key to the effective delivery of both health and social care services. It is recommended that in its first few meetings the Committee should concentrate on these high level strategic issues, although time will also need to be allowed for other items such as consideration of budget proposals and the annual report of the Minister on his/ her meetings with the voluntary sector, as required under paragraph 3.7 of the Voluntary Sector Partnership Scheme.

Policy Review

6. The Committee should consider undertaking a Policy Review. During the summer members may like to identify a topic and agree the terms of reference, so that initial consultation can take place over the summer recess. Topics the Committee could consider include the health benefits of fluoridation of water, or the health effects of possible future GM Crop plantings in Wales. The former has been on the current Committee's forward work programme as a possible item for detailed consideration. The latter has been requested by the organisation GM Free Cymru, which considers that the Assembly's GM crops free Wales policy needs to be more firmly underpinned by scientific evidence.

7. The current Committee has undertaken a number of policy reviews, and the new committee should be advised of the importance of evaluating the outcomes of those reviews. The reviews were:

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales (1999);
- The extension of categories of people entitled to free eye tests (2000) ;
- The Phillips (BSE) Inquiry Report (2001); and
- Services for children with Special Health Needs (2001 to 2002).

8. Lord Laming's report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Victoria Climbié was published in January, but the current Committee has not had the opportunity of considering his recommendations in the Welsh context. It is recommended that the new Committee should satisfy itself that action is being taken to address the recommendations.

Other Items for Consideration before the Summer Recess

9. **Domiciliary Care.** In November 2002 the current Committee examined the guidance that was being issued to local authorities on charging for domiciliary care. The Committee noted that the guidance would not be introduced until after May 3 2003 and agreed that the new Committee should be kept informed of the working group's progress. On 12 March the Committee considered the draft Domiciliary Care Agencies(Wales) regulations 2003 and associated standards. Members raised a number of concerns they would like to see addressed in finalising the regulations.

10. At its meeting on 26 February, the Committee agreed that a recommendation should be made to the successor Committee to examine the proposals for inspecting Social Services, in particular joint inspections, in the light of the response to the consultation process.

Legislation

11. The new Committee may wish to consider undertaking detailed examination of secondary legislation arising from the Health (Wales) Bill and the Community Care (Delayed Discharges) Bill.

12. In September last year the Committee scrutinised the Government's draft Mental Health bill. The Bill was not included in the Government's programme of legislation published through the Queen's speech. Should the Government revive its proposals for such a Bill the new Committee is recommended to consider carefully whether it is compatible with the mental health strategies in Wales.

13. On 12 March the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. The timing of publication may not allow the current Committee to consider the bill before the recess and the new committee may wish to examine at an early stage, so that its views may be fed into the Westminster process through the office of Secretary of State.

Committee Secretariat
March 2003