

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS-18-02(min)

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 23 October 2002

Time: 9.00am to 12.25pm

Venue: Committee Rooms 3&4, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance: **Members of Health & Social Services Committee**

Kirsty Williams (**Chair**) Brecon and Radnorshire

Geraint Davies Rhondda

Brian Gibbons Aberavon

Jane Hutt (Minister) Vale of Glamorgan

Ann Jones Vale of Clwyd

Dai Lloyd South Wales West

David Melding South Wales Central

Other Members

Huw Lewis Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney

Jonathan Morgan South Wales Central (**Item 2**)

Gwenda Thomas Neath (**Item 5**)

Officials In Attendance

Chris Burdett Children and Families Division

Dr Ruth Hall Chief Medical Officer

Peter Lawler Primary and Community Health Division

Ann Lloyd	Director, NHS in Wales
Mike Ponton	Health & Well Being Strategy and Planning Team
Helen Thomas	Director, Social Policy Department
Graham Williams	Social Services Inspectorate Wales
Bob Woodward	Social Services Inspectorate Wales
Secretariat:	
Jane Westlake	Committee Clerk
Claire Morris	Deputy Committee Clerk
Peter Jones	Counsel to the Committees (Item 2)

Item 1: Apologies and Substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Lynne Neagle and Jocelyn Davies. Huw Lewis substituted for Lynne Neagle.

1.2 Members were reminded of the requirement, under Standing Order 4.5, to declare any interests before taking part in proceedings. The following declarations were made:

- Geraint Davies, pharmacist and member of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council;
- Dai Lloyd, general practitioner and member of the Council of the City and County of Swansea.

Item 2: Minister's Monthly Report (9.00 - 10.10am)

Paper: HSS-18-02(p.1)

2.1 The Minister made a statement on the findings of the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales' (SSIW) examination of the arrangements for safeguarding residents in homes contracted by Cardiff County Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council to Hafod Housing Association. A copy is attached at Annex A.

2.2 Members welcomed the report and said it demonstrated the value of an independent examination in such circumstances. In response to Members' comments on the statement, the Minister said that Cardiff County Council, the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Hafod Housing Association would produce action

plans to respond to the report's recommendations. Hafod would be working closely with the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales on this and on clarifying the contractual relationships. The Minister would report back to the Committee in December on progress in taking forward the recommendations.

2.3 Graham Williams said that the action plans would include timescales to enable progress in each of the areas covered by the recommendations to be monitored. SSIW's remit and expertise had been in social services and social care rather than personnel issues, which had been reviewed in the reports commissioned by Cardiff from Malcolm Evans and Eversheds. They had reviewed the report produced by Eversheds to see if it contained any care issues that needed to be included in their investigation, and as a result had recommended that the local authority should review their procedures in light of the Eversheds report and Malcolm Evans's report. The Assembly had previously issued guidance on the investigation of abuse, which emphasised the need to distinguish between police investigations, disciplinary matters and care related issues. The SSIW report found that the care issues had been lost sight of and they would be looking to Cardiff County Council to demonstrate that it was able to make such distinctions.

2.4 The Chair said that she would like to allocate significant Committee time in January to discuss a number of social services issues that had arisen as a result of the joint review process. She thanked the Minister for responding to Members' concerns about the situation at Hazelcroft and thanked SSIW for their work in carrying out the enquiry.

2.5. The Minister and her officials made the following points in response to comments and questions from Members on the monthly report:

Section 1: Strategy Issues

- The Dental, Pharmacy and Optometry Strategies were out to consultation until 31 December 2002, and the Welsh Assembly Government planned to consider responses by the beginning of February 2003.
- The Regional Directors had now been identified and their formal acceptance of their appointment was awaited.
- LHB Chief Executives for Carmarthen and Denbighshire had not been appointed. Suitable candidates were being identified for Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire; appointments had been made for Ynys Mon and Newport; and interviews were being held for Swansea, Monmouthshire and Torfaen.
- The first round of applications for the Director of Finance of the NHS Wales Department had been unsuccessful. Cabinet Office had subsequently approved the upgrading of the post.

Section 2: NHS Performance

- Additional funding had been made available for tackling emergency pressures and delayed transfers of care and work was in place to identify ways of joint working.

- The findings of the review of Swansea and Carmarthenshire Trusts and Dyfed Powys Health Authority's failure to meet the 18-month orthopaedic waiting time target would be included in a future monthly report.
- Activity rate information had not been published to schedule because there was concern about its accuracy. It was hoped that the information would be available for publication within the next few weeks.
- There was an issue of how activity was defined as a result of the changing way in which health care was provided. Little of the work being done to keep people out of hospital, e.g. nurse led activity in the community, would be reflected in the statistics, which were hospital based.
- Wales had an extremely high level of emergency admissions, which placed greater pressure on the Service in terms of bed management and the ability to provide elective surgery.
- The Pontypridd & Rhondda Early Discharge Scheme for Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease would continue to receive funding from the Assembly.

Section 3: Improving Health and Tackling Inequalities

- Food co-operatives had been included in the Nutrition Strategy, and it was hoped that the Committee would have an opportunity to discuss the Strategy in the near future.
- The management committee of Epilepsy Wales had still not responded to the offer of funding.

Section 4: Quality Regulation and Inspection

- It was appropriate that once the programme of 22 joint reviews had been completed the methodology would be examined to see if there were any lessons to be learned. There had been no representations from the Welsh Local Government Association on the need to revise the format. The joint review system had brought in the user perspective and staff views.

Section 5: Social Care

- The new Operational Guidance for Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) on the regulations and standards in care homes for older people would be circulated to the Committee when it was published.
- The Minister had raised concerns regarding the performance of the Criminal Records Bureau with Ministers in the UK Government. It was suggested that the Chair also write, expressing the Committee's concerns.
- Ex-servicemen and women were included in the digital audiology investment. Consideration was also being given to a whole range of issues affecting ex-servicemen and women, as was happening in England.

Section 8: Health and Social Care Subordinate Legislation

- The Chair emphasised the need for Members to be able to tell whether items included in the

schedule were new or rolled forward from the previous schedule. She asked that in the next schedule each item be given a unique number so Members could track items from month to month. She also asked that an indication be given of whether it was EU derived, UK or Wales only legislation.

- David Melding gave notice that the Conservative Group would want the Committee to consider the following orders:
- Regulations under the Care Standards Act 2000 to regulate Domiciliary Care Agencies in Wales;
- National Assistance (Sums for personal requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2003;
- National Assistance (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Action

- Update on progress in implementing action plans by Cardiff County Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Hafod Housing Association to be provided in December.
- Report on failure to meet 18-month orthopaedic waiting time target by Carmarthenshire NHS Trust and Dyfed Powys Health Authority to be included in a future monthly report.
- Operational Guidance for CSIW to be circulated.
- Chair to write to UK Government Ministers expressing Committee's concerns at the performance of the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Format of legislation schedule to be amended to include unique numbering of items, highlighted changes and additions and an indication of whether EU, UK or Wales only legislation.

Item 3: Budget Proposals for 2003-04 (10.10 - 10.50am)

Paper: HSS-18-02(p.2)

3.1 The Minister apologised that the paper contained two errors:

- Paragraph 19 read that the Tribunals and Advisory Committees budget had reduced by £45k. The budget actually increased by £45k over 2003-04 plans and there was a total increase of £300k over 2002-03 provision.
- Paragraph 28 referred to an "increase of £426k over 2002-03" for the Food Standards Agency which was incorrect. The reference to a reduction of (£46k) was correct. The budget would reduce by £46k over 2003-04 plans and there would be a total reduction of £74k over 2002-03 provision.

3.2 The Minister highlighted the following areas:

- Planned capital investment in the current year of £8 million for central procurement to replace

ageing diagnostic imaging equipment, including Gamma cameras, breast screening x-ray systems and ultrasound scanning equipment.

- £4 million for cardiac catheter laboratory equipment at Morriston Hospital and the Royal Gwent Hospital. This would provide match funding towards the £5 million being provided by the New Opportunities Fund which would be used for building and installation work.
- Also this year, £0.5 million capital for NHS expansion and £0.45 million to acquire land for the proposed Tenby development.
- For NHS capital schemes from 2003-04:
 - A scheme for new services in Tenby and South Pembrokeshire;
 - Funding for the new community hospital for Ebbw Vale/Blaenau Gwent;
 - Public funding for the new community hospital in Merthyr Tydfil;
 - Public funding for redevelopment of community health care services in the Cynon Valley;
 - Refurbishment of theatres and relocation of the Accident and Emergency department for West Wales General Hospital, Carmarthen.
- £6.5 million capital over three years from 2003-04 had been allocated for the All Wales Ambulance Services Trust to provide new digital communication equipment. The equipment would be procured as part of a UK wide project. This was in addition to the £2.5 million revenue for the emergency ambulance services next year.
- For health the total planned budget next year was £3.8 billion – an increase of 50 per cent over the budget the Assembly inherited. Each of the Committee’s priorities for funding had secured extra money.
- £322 million extra funding had been allocated for the NHS. Local health boards (LHBs) would receive a £205 million increase next year. This was a 9.4 per cent increase for discretionary hospital and community health services; 9 per cent on drugs prescribing and a 2.5 per cent increase for General Medical Services. It was planned that draft LHB allocations would issue before Christmas. This would enable further progress to be made in improving key health services, including cancer, coronary heart disease and mental health.
- Funding for Agenda for Change and the new GP contract and over £68 million for:

Director’s new Performance and Finance Management Fund	£44 million
Innovations in Care	£1.3 million
Investment in IM&T	£3.2 million
Expanding NHS Direct	£2 million

Low vision aids	£1 million
Implementing Townsend in LHB allocation	£4.1 million
Emergency ambulance services revenue	£2.5 million
Resource accounting issues	£7 million
Strengthening CHCs	£0.5 million
Expanding NHS Breast screening	£0.5 million
New technology audiology aids	£0.7 million
Improved blood-screening tests	£1 million
Roll out of UNHS screening	£0.8 million

- Derek Wanless had agreed to act as adviser to the review of health and social care in Wales. The final terms of reference and composition of his team were being decided.
- Pending the outcome of the review and the Assembly Government's response to it, the budget tables contained relatively modest increases in the health budget lines for 2004-05 and 2005-06 and a significant reserve for those two years.
- By 2005-06 social services' ability to spend would have increased by around £230 million a year in cash terms. This was compared to the current year 2002-03, and taking Assembly grants and the local government revenue settlement together.
- Social services remained a priority. The 11% addition announced in the draft budget statement included increases in a number of the specific grants provided to support improvements to services for children and for new programmes such as the Older Persons Strategy and Fulfilling the Promises. Measures to assist local authorities to meet the capital costs of the Care Standards Act 2000, continuation of the delayed transfer of care scheme and extra care and support packages and the cost of funding reforms were being funded.
- The majority of support for social services expenditure by local authorities continued to come through the unhypothecated local government revenue settlement. The budget for local government had been broadly welcomed by the WLGA. It represented a 6.2% increase for 2003-2004 over 2002-2003 plans. This allowed for a significant increase for social services and was sufficient to meet pay and price pressures identified by the WLGA.

3.3 In response to Members' comments on the budget proposals, the Minister made the following points:

- The running costs of the new NHS structure would be no greater than that of the existing structure.
- The £20m End Year Flexibility was in addition to the extra £110 million for health and social services provided in the draft Budget for 2003-04.
- The £21m increase for NHS Education and Training including provision for funding the clinical schools in North Wales, Gwent and the Swansea Clinical Graduate School. The business cases for the schools were being finalised.
- From April 2003, Health Commission Wales would commission emergency ambulance services directly from the Ambulance Trust.
- Health Inequalities Funding was ringfenced. Bids had to be made for funding and some innovative schemes had been developed in Wales.
- Strong clinical networks were developing as a result of the Coronary Heart Disease National Service Framework (NSF), and these networks were key in deciding where investment in extra services, such as catheter laboratory equipment, was needed most.
- It was anticipated that funding for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services would transfer to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. The Health and Social Services Committee would continue to have an interest in the delivery of treatment and rehabilitation services and would seek to work jointly with the Local Government and Housing Committee on this issue. A review of the services available in Wales was being undertaken.
- The low vision aid service would be launched in North Wales but would be an all-Wales service. An update on progress would be provided to a future meeting and the Minister would write to Huw Lewis prior to the launch.
- Funding to assist care homes in ensuring the new minimum standards were met would be available only to local authority care homes. We are also providing funding to increase and improve the fees for the private care homes sector as part of the strategic approach to supporting that sector that will emerge from the work of the Care Strategy Group.

3.4 The Chair would write to the Minister acknowledging the amendments to the paper and confirming that the Committee welcomed the increased resources for health and social services budgets and looked forward to these resources being translated into better services for patients in Wales. The Wanless Review in Wales was welcomed and the Committee looked forward to participating in that process. The Committee acknowledged that their priorities had been recognised in the Minister's budget although they would continue to monitor the adequacy of funding to the Ambulance Trust. The Chair also acknowledged that, although not an agreed priority of the Committee, the Conservative Group felt that the budget should provide for any funding required as a result of proposed changes to National Assistance Regulations. A copy of the letter is attached at Annex C.

Action

- Chair to write to Minister outlining Committee's conclusions.
- Committee should consider inviting Derek Wanless to attend a future meeting.
- An update on the low vision aid service to be provided.
- Minister to write to Huw Lewis prior to the launch of the low vision aid service.

Item 4: Specialised Health Services for the Children of Wales (11.05 - 11.40am)

Papers: HSS-18-02(p.3)

4.1 The Minister introduced the paper, which outlined the outcome of the Dyfed Powys Health Authority's public consultation on proposals to develop specialised healthcare services for the children of Wales and set out the action being taken forward.

4.2 Members made the following points:

- The concept of managed clinical networks and the principle that every member of the network was of equal value were welcomed. The need for equity within the network was emphasised.
- Members were pleased that the Minister was considering the question of reimbursing travel and accommodation expenses.
- There were valuable lessons to be learned from this consultation on engaging the public more effectively in the future.

4.3 In response to Members' comments, the Minister made the following points:

- The independent chair overseeing the option appraisal process for paediatric neurosurgical services would probably be appointed from outside Wales.
- The option appraisal group would represent all stakeholders involved in the consultation process.
- The appointment and location of a new professorial chair in Pre-hospital Emergency Care would be a matter for the University of Wales College of Medicine.
- Unless the outcome of the option appraisal was significantly different to the original consultation proposals, CHCs would not be re-consulted.
- An update would be provided to the Committee at each stage of the process.

4.4 The Chief Medical Officer confirmed that she had been working closely with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and they were equally anxious to secure sustained specialised services for children in Wales. She said there was almost total commitment from the Service to the managed clinical network concept. There was also universal agreement about the key principles of managed clinical networks. The top priority was to provide a set of standards that determined the quality of services provided for a child, but that had to be set against the second priority of providing care as close to home as possible. She said there was a common misunderstanding that the term neurosurgery related only to neurosurgical intervention. It became a stated principle of the working groups that every part of the care of a child was of equal value and must be seen as part of a care pathway which should be a pathway for excellence and did not represent any individual element as more important than another.

Item 5: Review of Services for Children with Special Health Needs (11.40 - 12.15pm)

Papers: HSS-18-02(p.4) and HSS-18-02(p.5)

5.1 A draft of the Committee's report had been circulated. A copy of the amendments suggested by Members is attached at Annex B.

5.2 All the amendments were agreed, subject to the removal of "*chaotic (or unstable or unsettled) families*" from the first amendment tabled by Ann Jones.

5.3 The afternoon of 12 December had been identified as a possible date for the launch of the report, and the Clerk was asked to make enquiries about the possibility of using one of the children's centres visited during the review.

5.4 The Chair thanked the Clerk, Committee Secretariat and policy division officials for their work in putting together the report. She also thanked all those who had taken the time and trouble to give written and oral evidence to the Committee or otherwise taken part in the review.

Item 6: Minutes of 17 July and 11 September 2002 (12.15 - 12.20pm)

Papers: HSS-16-02(min) and HSS-17-02(min)

6.1 The minutes of 17 July were agreed.

6.2 The minutes of 11 September were agreed.

Item 7: Outstanding Action Points

7.1 Brian Gibbons said that he had received a letter from Maria Michael in response to his question regarding the eligibility for working family tax credit of people who were suspended from work. He said that he had written independently to the Department of Work and Pensions and received the same

standard response and asked that the Chair write on behalf of the Committee pointing out this anomaly and requesting a detailed response.

Action

- Chair to write to Department of Work and Pensions outlining Committee's concerns regarding the eligibility for working family tax credit of people suspended from work.

Item 8: Any Other Business

8.1 Geraint Davies advised that the Pharmaceutical Society hoped to organise a presentation of automated dispensing in the near future.

Annex A

Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) "Everybody's Concern" - Examination of Arrangements made by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan for Safeguarding Older People in Hafod Homes

I am pleased to report on and publish the findings of the SSIW examination of the arrangements for safeguarding residents in homes contracted by Cardiff County Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council to Hafod Housing Association.

The work involved has been substantial. About 150 people have been interviewed during the course of the fieldwork as well as contact with some 30 residents in Hafod homes other than Hazelcroft. Contact was sought with all former Hazelcroft residents at the point of closure. Nineteen former residents were interviewed. In remaining cases some were too ill or lacked the capacity to be seen and contact was made with the families. Almost all were spoken to and asked for their views. SSIW made sure that all those who wished to speak to them did so.

The report describes the arrangements which involved the local authorities providing the care manager and care staff, while Hafod was the registered person and provided the registered manager for the accommodation. As a result, the report concludes that "the main means to safeguard the wellbeing of residents were not used, ineffective or confused... We consider the confused accountability has inherent risks for the safeguarding of residents." I am however, reassured that most residents of Hazelcroft and other homes, as well as their families, spoke well of the care they received. The other homes generally provided care of a satisfactory standard and there were examples of good practice.

Hazelcroft home is now closed but it is important that the wider implications and findings for the care of older people are considered and acted on. The report makes 26 recommendations to improve and clarify the accountability for ensuring the wellbeing of residents. While the responsibility of implementing these rests with Cardiff County Council, the Vale of Glamorgan and Hafod, the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) established in April 2002 will also have a crucial role to play in ensuring that the necessary regulations are complied with.

I am asking the SSIW in the case of the local authorities and CSIW in the case of Hafod to monitor the action plans being called for in response to this report. For Cardiff this will be as part of the action plan being prepared in response to the Joint Review published last month. I will ask for a progress report so that I can further inform the Health and Social Services Committee in December 2002.

Comments from Members

Ref	Member	Comment
3.1	Ann Jones	Recommendations – 3 rd bullet point, amend to read ".....disadvantaged families, <i>chaotic (or unstable or unsettled) families</i> , travellers and transient families, <i>young lone parents, parents of low birth weight babies</i> , ethnic and other....."
3.1	Brian Gibbons	<p>Recommendations -</p> <p>4th bullet point – amend to read "<i>evidence based</i> antenatal screening..."</p> <p>Is there also an issue in relation to pre-conception counselling and advice?</p> <p><i>(comment from Clerk – written evidence was received from SHSCW who referred to their genetic services. However there was no discussion by the Committee of pre-conception counselling / advice.)</i></p>
3.2.5	Brian Gibbons	Asks if any of the information is web based. <i>(Clerk's note Yes it is, but it's not easy for the un-initiated to find. We could include the web address)</i>
3.2	Brian Gibbons	Recommendations: 2 nd bullet point, add at end " <i>Where appropriate genetic counselling should be offered.</i> "

3.3.11	Brian Gibbons	<p>Suggests that a sentence be added saying that if attendance is not possible some form of written communication should be circulated.</p> <p>He also suggests that the growing role of video conferencing should be explored. <i>(Clerk's comment: reference is made to the use of video conferencing.)</i></p>
3.3.11	Gwenda Thomas	<p>Insert additional para to read:</p> <p><i>"The transition period between moving from children's services to adult services needs to be fully recognised, and preparations need to be put in place well in advance prior to the move taking place."</i></p>
3.3	Brian Gibbons	<p>Under this section Brian also refers to the evidence the Committee received on the importance of benefits advice and the potential it has to improve family incomes. <i>(Clerk's comment: this could perhaps be spelt out more clearly in the previous section in 3.2.4, where the key worker is mentioned as someone who could co-ordinate information as well as securing other services.)</i></p>
3.3	Brian Gibbons	<p>Recommendations 3rd bullet point, should anything be said about the potential of the electronic health record as a means? <i>(Clerk's comment: this was not mentioned in discussion.)</i></p>

3.4.14	Gwenda Thomas	<p>Add an additional para to read:</p> <p><i>"Recognition needs to be made as to who should take responsibility for the administration of medication for children while at school, especially where a school either does not have its own nurse or where one is not available."</i></p> <p><i>(Clerk's comments would it be clearer if the opening sentence were re-worded to read: "Local Health Boards should agree a protocol with the local education authority to specify who should take responsibility for the administration....."?)</i></p>
3.4	David Melding	<p>Recommendations – 2nd bullet point. As drafted it could imply a dilution of the professional standard of speech therapists. Suggests the following:</p> <p><i>"the feasibility of the position of speech therapy assistants should be explored to undertake, under supervision, basic speech therapy services."</i></p>
3.5.8	Gwenda Thomas	<p>Add a sentence at the end of the paragraph to read:</p> <p><i>"There needs to be recognition made of the crucial need for respite care to be available to families in times of crisis at home."</i></p> <p><i>(Clerk's comment: this might be more appropriate in para 3.5.13, under conclusions.)</i></p>
3.6.6.	Brian Gibbons	<p>Need for informed benefit advice <i>(Clerk's comment I assume this refers to eligibility for disabled facilities grant. This could be added in as an additional recommendation.)</i></p>

3.5	David Melding	<p>Recommendations :add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"The provision of effective and flexible respite services must be seen as a pre-requisite for sustainable caring responsibilities within families.</i> ● <i>The Welsh Assembly Government should encourage each local authority in Wales to support a "Special Needs Support and Advice Centre" to provide services for children and support for carers and families."</i>
3.6	David Melding	<p>Recommendations : add</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"Particular care should be taken to ensure that aids, equipment and adaptations are fit for purpose and child centred. This requires regular reappraisal of the suitability of materials as children grow older."</i>
3.7	Brian Gibbons	<p>Recommendation: Queries the conflict between the statement that there is <i>"much apparent good practice around Wales that should be validated and disseminated"</i> and the statement in the Chair's foreword that there are <i>"pockets of good practice."</i></p> <p><i>(Clerk's comment. The recommendation at 3.7 refers to SEN. Members felt that there were good developments in SEN, but did not specify examples.)</i></p>
3.7	David Melding	<p>Recommendation: add</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"The move to special needs provision within a mainstream setting should be welcomed but greater emphasis should be placed on the monitoring of special needs services so that they do not become diluted</i> ● <i>The NSF for Children should contain a detailed sub section on special educational and health needs."</i> ● <i>A member of the board of each Local Health Board in Wales should be designated as responsible for children's services and children's rights.</i>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The situation of children under 5 with severe health needs requires urgent attention so that they receive appropriate pre-school education.</i> |
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Annex C

Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Health and Social Services Committee

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay

Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Jane Hutt AM

Minister for Health and Social Services

Eich cyf / Your Ref

Ein cyf / Our Ref HSS- 18-02

25 October 2002

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2003-2004

Thank you for your comprehensive presentation of your budget proposals for 2003-2004 at the meeting of the Health and Social Services Committee on 23 October.

The Committee noted the corrections you made orally to the paper (HSS-18-02(p.2)) relating to Tribunals and Advisory Committees 9paragraph 190 and the Food Standards Agency (paragraph 28). The amendments have been noted in the minutes.

The Committee welcomes the increased funding for health and social services and we look forward to the resultant improvements in health and social care. The Committee is pleased that its priorities have been recognised in your budget and will monitor the Welsh Assembly Government's progress in achieving them. The Committee will pay particular attention to the funding and performance of the Ambulance Trust.

The Committee also welcomes the involvement of Derek Wanless in leading the review of Health and Social Care in Wales and we will await his findings with interest.

I also would also bring to your attention the views of the Conservative group that the budget should also

make provision for any funding required in consequence of any changes to the National Assistance Regulations.

Kirsty Williams AM

Chair