

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 21 March 2002

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

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

Contents

- 1 Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
- 2 Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Funds held within Local Hospitals of NHS Trusts

Q9 Brian Hancock: Will the Minister please make a statement on the funds held within the local hospitals of NHS trusts, and how individual wards are able to access those funds? (OAQ16502)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): NHS trusts in Wales receive their revenue income from health authorities to cover the costs of providing healthcare services. The management of these funds is a matter for individual trusts, but it is good practice for revenue budgets to be delegated to ward and other local management level as appropriate. The Assembly allocates capital funding directly to NHS trusts.

Questions 10 (OAQ16566) and 11 (OAQ16565) withdrawn.

Implications of the Abolition of Health Authorities

Q12 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: What implications will the abolition of health authorities have for human resource planning in the NHS in Wales? (OAQ16516)

Jane Hutt: Following the abolition of health authorities, the role of the Assembly and the local health groups will change to enable the new workforce planning process to be delivered. LHG staff are currently being trained to bring their workforce planning skills up to the necessary standard.

Registration at a Dentist Surgery

Q13 Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on what is being done to encourage more people in Wales to register with a dentist? (OAQ16562)

Jane Hutt: Securing improvements in the oral health of the people of Wales is a fundamental principle of our primary care strategy. I recognise that regular attendance at a dentist's surgery is an important component of maintaining oral health, and our policies will continue to encourage this. For example, I have just agreed a package of measures, which includes a continuation of the Welsh dental initiative. This provides funding to attract NHS dentists into those parts of Wales where they are most needed.

All-Wales Model of Medical Training

Q14 Janet Ryder: What progress is being made with the development of the all-Wales model of medical training? (OAQ16515)

Jane Hutt: Our medical undergraduate expansion programme is based on a hub and spoke model with the University of Wales College of Medicine. The satellite clinical school at Swansea is in place. A

graduate entry scheme at Swansea, and clinical schools in north Wales and at the Royal Gwent Hospital are under consideration.

Darparieth Gwasanaethau Ffrwythloni *In Vitro*

C15 Dafydd Wigley: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar ei pholisi i sicrhau bod gwasanaethau IVF yn cael eu darparu ym mhob rhan o Gymru? (OAQ16507) [W]

Jane Hutt: Mae'r Adran Iechyd a Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru wedi cyfeirio canllawiau Coleg Brenhinol Obstetreg a Gynecolegwyr ar ddarparu gwasanaeth anffrwythlondeb i'r Sefydliad Cenedlaethol dros Ragoriaeth Glinigol (NICE). Mae NICE yn rhagweld y bydd y gwaith ar ganllawiau clinigol wedi'i gwblhau erbyn Hydref 2003.

Provision of In Vitro Fertilisation Services

Q15 Dafydd Wigley: Will the Minister make a statement on her policy to secure a provision of IVF services in all parts of Wales? (OAQ16507) [W]

Jane Hutt: The Department of Health and the Welsh Assembly Government has referred the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists's guidelines on the provision of infertility service to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). NICE anticipate that work on the issue of clinical guidelines should be completed by October 2003.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Visit to Cuba

Q6 David Davies: How will the Minister's recent trip to Cuba be of benefit to Welsh schools? (OAQ16545)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): I am keen to learn from best practice wherever that may be found. Cuba has a strong track record on numeracy and literacy, which I was able to explore with the Minister of Education, Dr Luis Gomez, during my visit. I also explored issues of transition between primary and secondary schools, which is a priority for the Assembly.

The Head of the Education Department at the University of Wales, Swansea was also part of the delegation that accompanied me, and he has made links with education departments in Havana.

Anglesey Local Education Authority

Q7 Peter Rogers: Will the Minister order an investigation into allegations that Anglesey Local Education Authority deliberately failed to comply with the code of practice for complaints against teachers? (OAQ16484)

Jane Davidson: I have not received a complaint from the parties directly involved in this matter. If a complaint were to be made, it would be investigated in the normal way.

Shortage of Engineers in Wales

Q8 Brian Hancock: How will the Minister secure training provision to overcome the shortage of engineers in Wales? (OAQ16584)

Jane Davidson: Education and Learning Wales will work with employers, national training organisations and the new sector skills councils to address identified skills shortages. We have recently strengthened

these arrangements by setting up an employers group as part of the Future Skills Wales partnership. This group will be able to provide strategic advice from an employer's perspective on what more we need to do to address skills gaps and skills shortages.

Class Sizes in the Mid and West Wales Region

Q9 Delyth Evans: What progress has the Minister made in cutting class sizes in the Mid and West Wales region? (OAQ16523)

Jane Davidson: We are making significant progress.

The latest available information is that only two infant classes in the six local authority areas involved have over 30 pupils. In each case, the exception is a permitted one. Such exceptions generally relate to the admission of a pupil outside the normal admissions round.

The Assembly provided additional funding to local authorities in 2001-02 and is continuing to provide such funding in 2002-03 to bring junior class sizes down to 30, by September 2003. In September 2001, 14 per cent of junior pupils in Mid and West Wales were in classes of over 30 compared with the all-Wales average of 22 per cent.

Cynnydd y Fargen Newydd yng Nghymru

C10 Jocelyn Davies: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar gynnydd y Fargen Newydd yng Nghymru? (OAQ16590) [W]

Jane Davidson: Y Gwasanaeth Cyflogi sy'n gyfrifol am y Fargen Newydd yng Nghymru, ac nid Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru. Fodd bynnag, mae'n chwarae rôl bwysig wrth helpu pobl ddi-waith a phobl heb weithgarwch economaidd i gael swyddi, ac mae'n bleser gennyf gael cyfle i bwysleisio'i llwyddiant. Hyd yma, mae tua 41,000 o bobl wedi derbyn cymorth i gael gwaith yng Nghymru ers i'r Fargen Newydd gael ei chyflwyno yn 1998.

Progress of New Deal in Wales

Q10 Jocelyn Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress of the New Deal in Wales? (OAQ16590) [W]

Jane Davidson: New Deal is delivered in Wales by the Employment Service and, as such, is not the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government. However, it plays an important role in helping unemployed and economically inactive people back to work, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to highlight its success. To date, some 41,000 people have been helped into work in Wales since the introduction of the New Deal in 1998.

Education Reform Bill

Q11 Jonathan Morgan: Has any progress been made in setting up specialist schools as a result of the forthcoming Education Reform Bill? (OAQ16471)

Jane Davidson: The Education Bill currently before Parliament does not deal with the issue of specialist schools.

The Welsh Assembly Government has no plans to establish specialist schools in Wales and remains committed to non-selective comprehensive education and the pursuit of excellence in all our schools. This does not preclude a school from building on its particular strengths within the context of delivery of the national curriculum.

Question 12 (OAQ16478) withdrawn.

Individual Learning Accounts

Q13 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the latest situation with regard to individual learning accounts in Wales? (OAQ16487)

Jane Davidson: An ILA programme development team has been established, consisting of Assembly and ELWa officials, to progress the implementation of a successor programme. Stakeholders are being consulted. Two external evaluation exercises are underway, and ELWa is undertaking an internal audit of its ILA systems. Reports on all these exercises are due before the end of April.

I have asked ELWa to introduce a successor programme by September. Clearly, the important thing is to get the programme's design and management controls right, to ensure that people in Wales get the best possible support and value for money

Question 14 (OAQ16592) withdrawn.

Access to Numeracy and Literacy Courses

Q15 David Davies: What is the Minister doing to improve access to numeracy and literacy courses? (OAQ16544)

Jane Davidson: The national basic skills strategy for Wales contains a wide range of measures aimed at improving access to numeracy and literacy courses. These include:

- expansion of the family literacy and family numeracy courses which have proved successful in improving the basic skills of both children and adults
- out-of-school initiatives to engage pupils in basic skills activities outside the formal timetable and curriculum
- self-help programmes for adults with skills just below the level of functional competence, who can access good-quality learning materials and get additional support and advice when they need it. These programmes are accessed online through home computers or via local learning centres
- projects in voluntary and community settings and in the workplace, offering encouragement, advice and support for those with poor basic skills to widen the availability and strengthen the effectiveness of programmes.

These initiatives are in addition to the widely available adult literacy and numeracy courses and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses offered by further education institutions, local authorities and other providers.