

Answers issued to Members on 25 June 2009

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

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

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Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What plans does the Minister have to undertake awareness-raising campaigns on the rights and special needs of children with disabilities? (WAQ54386)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): Our policies support the rights of all children and young people and seek to help them overcome barriers to accessing those rights. We have taken steps to ensure that the needs of disabled children are at the forefront of our policy development.

I established a Task Group made up of Senior Assembly Government Officials and representatives of the Disabled Children Matter Wales campaign. I meet the campaign group regularly and I have issued regular progress updates in the form of cabinet papers and written statements.

We launched 'We are on the way: A Policy Agenda to Transform the Lives of Disabled Children and Young People' on 3 December 2008. This is the first time that a comprehensive document has been produced outlining key policies right across the Assembly Government. Copies have been distributed widely across Wales.

The Ministerial Communications Team have prepared a communications plan to include the various activities around services for disabled children and young people.

One of the priorities to emerge from the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan is the development of awareness raising materials which will be easily accessible to a wide range of practitioners.

Another important development is a benefits awareness raising campaign for the families of disabled children and young people which was announced by my Ministerial Colleague Dr Brian Gibbons on 12th May 2009.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What plans does the Minister have to encourage the inclusion of disabled children in society and to prevent discrimination and institutionalisation? (WAQ54387)

Jane Hutt: The Single Equality Scheme (SES) will be key to preventing discrimination. It will enable the Assembly Government to tackle equality, diversity and human rights issues across all equality strands.

Inclusion of disabled children and young people is an intrinsic element of many of our policies and guidance documents such as the Children's NSF and the Foundation Phase. We also recognise that disabled children may face additional barriers. This is why we made additional funding available via Cymorth for play facilities for disabled children, for example, and also why we have issued a guidance pack entitled 'Promoting Disability Equality in Schools'.

We want to make sure that disabled children's views are respected and listened to. The Children's NSF contains key actions to this effect.

The Proposed Education (Wales) Measure will for the first time give children the right of appeal about their special educational needs and/or the right to make a claim of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales.

A crucial factor in preventing the institutionalisation of disabled children is to ensure that families are given the support they need. The development of an Early Support Programme, support to disabled children and their families for short breaks and pilot schemes in five areas of Wales providing 'transition

key workers' are examples of how we aim to provide the families of disabled children and young people with the support they need to enable children to live with their families.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What monies have been set aside to help disabled children and young people in Wales? (WAQ54388)

Jane Hutt: Important funding initiatives include:

- £225,000 for provision of changing places toilets across Wales
- £2.2 million to develop an Early Support Programme for disabled children under the age of five and their families.
- £1 million included in the Cymorth budget for 2008-09 onwards to advance access and development of play and leisure services for disabled children and young people.
- £500,000 per year for three years for key transition workers to support young people with special educational needs. Our bid to the 'Reaching the Heights' European Social Fund grant scheme has been successful and the total available has now doubled to £3m.
- Following the launch of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan, funding of £1.8m was made available for 2008-09 to support local authorities to map the services available across all sectors and to identify service gaps and how these could be addressed. This was in addition to the recurrent sum of £1.7m which has been made available to local authorities from 2007-08 specifically to develop specialist services for children with autism.
- £500,000 available over the next two years to raise awareness of the benefits that parents and carers of children with disabilities are entitled to.
- £250,000 available for three years to help local authorities provide play opportunities for disabled children. Local authorities will also be expected to set aside a minimum of £250,000 from already allocated resources for this purpose to create a fund of £500,000.
- £1.5m is also being made available to fund short break services for children with complex disabilities.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the RAISE initiative? (WAQ54389)

Jane Hutt: RAISE was originally a two-year programme providing £16 million each year to support the social justice agenda in education. The aim was to tackle the link between socio-economic disadvantage and educational under-achievement. In 2008-2009, £16.25 million was made available to allow the RAISE programme to continue for a third year.

At the outset, schools were eligible for a RAISE grant, if they had 50 or more pupils of statutory school age, at least 20% of whom were eligible for free school meals. In view of the character of the programme, there have been no additions to, or removals from, the list of participating schools, other than in the case of closures or amalgamations.

In each year, £14.5 million has gone to qualifying schools. In addition, £1 million a year has gone to local authorities to support the education of looked-after children.

A further £6.59 million is available for RAISE in 2009-2010 and £1.03 million in 2010-2011.

In consultation with local consortia of LEAs, the WLGA and ADEW, my officials have produced a strategy for the use of the Year 4 RAISE funding, to ensure that it builds on and consolidates the gains of the previous three years of substantial RAISE grants.

During the spring, each of the four regional consortia of local authorities developed its own plan for implementing the national strategy in the local context. Each consortium has agreed a package of collaborative activities that will constitute the regional 2009-2010 RAISE Programme. The consortia are currently working with their local authorities and schools to finalise action plans and funding details for these initiatives.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Has the RAISE grant ever been used for assisting schools which have been placed under 'special measures' and, if so, how was it implemented? (WAQ54391)

Jane Hutt: RAISE funding has been distinctive because it has focussed on the obstacles to effective learning that poverty presents rather than on school effectiveness in general terms. During the first three years of the programme, the entitlement of any school to funding has been determined by formula alone.

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): How much money has been allocated, to date, to FE colleges in Wales as a result of the ProAct scheme on a college by college basis? (WAQ 54394)

Jane Hutt: We have allocated the funding indicated below to FE colleges based in Wales.

Coleg Sir Gar	£1,237,989
Bridgend College	£18,535
Swansea College	£2,790
Swansea Business College	£350
Neath Port Talbot College	£148,030
Bangor University	£6,450
Cardiff Business School	£19,262
Coleg Morganwg	£5,376
University of Glamorgan	£14,756
UWIC	£600
Coleg Gwent	£12,890
Coleg Powys	£501
Glyndwr University	£2,300
Deeside College	£4,065
Pembrokeshire College	£109,212
Llandrillo College	£81,685
	£1,664,791

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): What has been the total cost to date of preparing for swine flu in Wales? (WAQ54395)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): There is currently no separate Swine Flu preparedness budget.