

## Written Questions answered between 21 and 28 October 2004

[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 First Minister

#### **The Delivery of Welsh Assembly Government Policies in the Vale of Clwyd**

**Ann Jones:** Will the Minister make a statement on the delivery of Welsh Assembly Government policies across ministerial portfolios in the Vale of Clwyd since May 2003? (WAQ38663)

**The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan):** The First Minister's report for 2003-04 was published in July and sets out the key achievements for the Welsh Assembly Government since May 2003. Specifically in the Vale of Clwyd, we have launched the river Clwyd coastal area package, which aims to produce an integrated transport network for the tourist area, and the inequalities in health fund approved three projects that are benefiting disadvantaged communities within the Vale of Clwyd.

#### **The Modernisation of the Welsh Assembly Government's IT System**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the modernisation of the Welsh Assembly Government's information technology system? (WAQ38715)

**The First Minister:** The Welsh Assembly Government's IT system is being modernised through the ICT transformation programme within the MERLIN partnership. The transformed environment will be a building block for future business change and organisational agility.

The modernisation will involve the upgrading of communications networks and desktop technologies across the Assembly estate. It will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of infrastructure support and associated IT processes that will enable and support, among other things:

- a stable and supported infrastructure;
- geographic and organisational changes;
- increased mobility of users;
- location-independent working;
- flexible working practices; and
- future technology requirements that meet evolving business demands.

## **Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport**

### **Public Funding from National Assembly for Wales Budgets**

**Leighton Andrews:** Will the Minister state the full amount of public funding from the National Assembly for Wales's budgets that goes to the National Library of Wales, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, the Arts Council of Wales, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Welsh National Opera? (WAQ38644)

**The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh):** The Assembly's grant in aid for 2004-05 for the National Library of Wales, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and the Arts Council of Wales is:

<b>NLW</b>	<b>£10.3 million</b>
<b>NMGW</b>	<b>£20.8 million</b>
<b>ACW</b>	<b>£24.0 million</b>

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Welsh National Opera are revenue clients of the Arts Council of Wales and, for 2004-05, they will receive £802,000 and £4,085,000 respectively.

## **Equal Access to Sporting Opportunities**

**Val Lloyd:** What measures are in place to ensure that those with disabilities have equal access to sporting opportunities? (WAQ38655)

**Alun Pugh:** The Welsh Assembly Government is totally committed to ensuring that those with a disability have equal access to sporting opportunities so that they can achieve their full potential.

The Sports Council for Wales is working closely with the Federation of Disability Sport Wales to establish an infrastructure that is able to identify and develop talent across the 22 local authorities in Wales. This will increase opportunities for those wishing to be involved in disability sport, from grass roots to elite and paralympic levels.

In addition, free swimming for children and young and older people is aimed at removing barriers and improving access. One of our key partners in the delivery and implementation of free swimming is the Federation of Disability Sport Wales, and an essential part of the scheme criteria is that structured sessions for those with a disability are provided throughout Wales.

## **Promoting the Benefits of Sport to Children**

**Val Lloyd:** How is the Minister promoting the benefits of sport to children? (WAQ38656)

**Alun Pugh:** The benefits of children participating in sport and physical activity are set out in the 'Climbing Higher' strategy that is to be published, together with an action plan, in the very near future. The free swimming for children and young people programme is currently making an important contribution in driving forward this agenda.

In addition, many of the Sports Council for Wales's programmes, such as Dragon Sport and Girls First, focus on promoting and delivering the benefits of sport to children. The aim is to give children positive experiences in sport and physical activity and to develop healthy lifelong attitudes and behaviour.

## **Encouraging Older People to Take Up Regular Exercise**

**Val Lloyd:** What initiatives have been undertaken to encourage older people to take up regular exercise? (WAQ38658)

**Alun Pugh:** Next month, the Welsh Assembly Government will be delivering its manifesto commitment by launching a national free swimming scheme for older people. The older people's pilot is focused on achieving a health benefit across Wales's older population through both casual and structured water-based activity.

## **The Number of Attendees at WNO Performances**

**Leighton Andrews:** Will the Minister make a statement on the number of attendees at Welsh National Opera performances in 2002-03, 2001-02, 2000-01 and 1999-2000? (WAQ38686)

**Alun Pugh:** The information on the number of attendees at WNO performances is as follows: in 1999-2000, 140,000 people attended WNO theatre performances; in 2000-01, there were 133,000 attendees; in 2001-02, there were 85,000; in 2002-03, there were 101,000; and in 2003-04, there were 113,000.

In addition, of course, productions that have been broadcast by S4C and Radio 3 and, more recently, Classic FM will have been heard and seen by large numbers of people, and the WNO education and outreach programmes further increase access to the company.

## **The Modernisation of IT Systems in Executive ASPBs**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the Minister make a statement on the modernisation of information technology systems in executive Assembly sponsored public bodies covered by his portfolio? (WAQ38720)

**Alun Pugh:** All cultural ASPBs have a policy to maintain and upgrade IT systems to deliver an effective and efficient service to their customers and partners. The Sports Council for Wales has recently developed its corporate website to improve knowledge management and the Arts Council of Wales has invested in a new accounting system and a new information management system. All Welsh Language Board offices have a broadband connection and video conferencing is available in the three main offices. The WLB has worked closely with Microsoft on the translation of Office XP into Welsh and with Canolfan Bedwyr on its Cysgliad project, which is an updated version of the Welsh spelling and grammar checker. The National Museums and Galleries of Wales has established a wide area network linking high-speed local data networks at each of its sites to provide secure access to a wide range of services, and enhanced finance, payroll and human resources systems to provide greater flexibility and to take advantage of simpler service delivery through standard web browsers. The National Library of Wales has a well-developed ICT programme to record and present its collections effectively. The library is looking at ways of further developing its systems, especially in the areas of digitisation, life cycle and access management issues in the digital domain. I have made available an additional £1.1 million for ICT developments, which will focus on a new system for managing the library's collections and digital materials, subject to agreeing project plans in detail.

## **Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport**

### **Train Operating Companies Operating in North Wales**

**Carl Sargeant:** In the past year, what discussions has the Minister had with train operating companies operating in north Wales? (WAQ38624)

**The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies):** I meet the train operating companies regularly, including Arriva Trains Wales and Virgin Trains, which both operate in north Wales.

### **Bus/Coach Operating Companies in Wales**

**Carl Sargeant:** In the past year, what discussions has the Minister had with bus/coach operating companies in Wales? (WAQ38625)

**Andrew Davies:** I formally meet the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents the bus and coach industry, every six months. I also meet individual operators from time to time.

### **The Economic Regeneration of Rhyl**

**Ann Jones:** What discussions has the Minister had regarding the contents of the report 'Rhyl Going Forward' into the economic regeneration of Rhyl? (WAQ38631)

**Andrew Davies:** I met with Ann Jones AM and Chris Ruane MP to discuss the strategy document 'Rhyl Going Forward' on 14 October and, together with Ann Jones and Chris Ruane, I will be meeting Councillor Rhiannon Wyn Hughes, leader of Denbighshire County Council, in the near future.

### **Support for the Optronics Industry in North Wales**

**Ann Jones:** What recent discussions has the Minister had regarding support for the optronics industry in north Wales? (WAQ38632)

**Andrew Davies** I frequently meet companies in this sector and have visited the optic technium at St Asaph. Through their participation in the optoelectronics forum, which is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Development Agency, officials have regular contact with businesses in this sector. There are a number of developments in hand to support the sector, including the recently completed optic technium at St Asaph Business Park, which is now open for business.

### **Tackling Economic Inactivity in Wales**

**John Griffiths:** Will the Minister make a statement on progress in tackling economic inactivity in Wales? (WAQ38633)

**Andrew Davies:** Raising economic activity rates by helping more people into jobs is one of the Welsh

Assembly Government's four key priorities identified in 'Wales: A Better Country'. Through our strategies for tackling economic inactivity set out in 'A Winning Wales' and the skills and employment action plan (soon to be followed by SEAP 2), we and our partners already have a range of policies in place to help people into work. Recent improvements in employment rates in Wales show that these have had some success. The latest Labour Force Survey estimates for the three months to August 2004 show that, while the employment rate at 71.2 per cent was below the historically high rates seen over the previous year, it was still 2.6 percentage points higher than the average for 2001.

Responsibility for employment policy rests with the UK Government through the work of the Department for Work and Pensions, and measures such as the New Deal, delivered in Wales by Jobcentre Plus under the welfare to work agenda, make an important contribution to our economic and social objectives. Our recent report on raising economic activity rates in Wales reviews the scope for new action and identifies specific measures to help those who are currently economically inactive. As a result, we are working closely with Jobcentre Plus Wales to develop and deliver three pilots, funded by European structural funds Objectives 1 and 3, aimed at helping people who are claiming benefit and who want to work to find and to keep a job. Proposals are currently being considered by the Welsh European Funding Office, but the intention is to have all three pilots in place by March 2005.

### **The Effectiveness of Bus Subsidies**

**Peter Black:** What evaluation has the Minister undertaken of the effectiveness of bus subsidies? (WAQ38634)

**Andrew Davies:** The local transport services grant, which contributes to local authority expenditure on socially necessary uncommercial bus services, is kept under continual review.

The bus service operators grant scheme (previously the fuel duty rebate), administered by the Department for Transport on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, has been reviewed recently and it was concluded that it should continue on the current basis.

### **The Latest Job Figures in Wales**

**Janice Gregory:** Would the Minister make a statement on the latest job figures in Wales? (WAQ38635)

**Andrew Davies:** According to the labour force survey, there were 1,311,000 people in employment in Wales over the three months to August 2004. This was 58,000 higher than the same period in 2002 and 90,000 higher than the average for 1999.

### **Rail Services in Wales**

**Janice Gregory:** Would the Minister make a statement on the latest achievements with rail services in Wales? (WAQ38636)

**Andrew Davies:** We are providing capital for reopening the Vale of Glamorgan line next year and are working with local authorities to reopen the Ebbw Vale line to Cardiff from 2006. We are working with Arriva Trains Wales on a £1 million shared programme to improve security at stations in north Wales and I have provided funding for British Transport Police. Funding is also being provided for a second winter Sunday train on the Heart of Wales line and for the Association of Community Rail Partnerships in Wales.

### **Safety on the A40/A449 through Monmouth**

**David Davies:** What is being done to improve safety on the A40/A449 through Monmouth? (WAQ38637)

**Andrew Davies:** Renewal of the carriageway at the Wye bridge traffic lights on the A40 at Monmouth has recently been completed. This included the additional safety feature of a layer of high friction surfacing in the immediate vicinity of the lights. This work has completed the resurfacing of the A40 from the south end of the Gibraltar tunnels to Dixton roundabout with noise-reducing thin surfacing materials. We are also considering, in conjunction with Monmouthshire County Council, improvements to Dixton roundabout, including the access to Agincourt School. This work is a direct result of our recent appraisal of the A40 at Monmouth as I set out to you in my letter dated 8 September.

### **Footpath Safety in the Pandy Area**

**David Davies:** What is being done to increase footpath safety in the Pandy area? (WAQ38638)

**Andrew Davies:** A street lighting renewal and improvement scheme for the A465 at Pandy has been programmed for commencement in the financial year 2005-06. Proposals to extend the footpath network in this area were recently examined using a number of assessment criteria. After careful consideration, it was concluded that this could not be justified.

### **Speed Restrictions on Major Roads**

**Carl Sargeant:** Since 1999, how many times has the Welsh Assembly Government imposed speed restrictions on major roads, including trunk roads, in north Wales to improve safety? (WAQ38649)

**Andrew Davies:** Since 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government has identified 10 locations where 30, 40 or 50 mph permanent speed restrictions have been imposed on trunk road locations in north Wales. In addition, seven de-restriction orders have been imposed to apply the national speed limit in street-lit areas.

**Chief Executive of the WDA**

**Alun Cairns:** How did the Minister ensure sufficient competition in securing an appropriate shortlist for the post of chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency? (WAQ38667)

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister make a statement on the WDA's chief executive officer's term of contract in view of the short timescale of the role? (WAQ38668)

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister make a statement on the terms and conditions of appointment of the WDA's chief executive? (WAQ38669)

**Alun Cairns:** What process was followed by the Welsh Assembly Government in appointing the chief executive officer of the WDA? (WAQ38670)

**Alun Cairns:** What communications, written or otherwise, took place between the Minister or any Assembly officials with board members of the WDA in relation to the appointment of the WDA's chief executive? (WAQ38671)

**Alun Cairns:** What role did the Minister, the Welsh Assembly Government or their officials play in the appointment of the WDA's new chief executive officer? (WAQ38672)

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister make a statement on how the Nolan principles were applied in the recent appointment of the WDA's chief executive in view of the fact that the chief executive becomes a member of the board? (WAQ38673)

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister confirm that the Nolan principles were adopted and followed in relation to the appointment of the chief executive officer of the WDA? (WAQ38674)

**Alun Cairns:** What process was followed by the WDA in appointing the chief executive officer of the WDA? (WAQ38675)

**Andrew Davies:** The chief executive is an ex-officio member of the WDA board and, as such, is not appointed by me, or the Welsh Assembly Government, but by the WDA board. It is for the board to determine what recruitment process is required provided that it complies with the conditions set out in the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 (as amended) and the agency's management statement and financial memorandum.

I have referred your questions to the chair of the WDA. I shall write to you once I have received his reply.

### **The Cardiff Eastern Bay Link Road**

**Nick Bourne:** What recent discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff County Council about funding the Cardiff eastern bay link road? (WAQ38677)



**Andrew Davies:** My officials and I are in regular contact with Cardiff County Council about a range of transport issues.

### **The Duffryn Link of the Newport Southern Distributor Road**

**Nick Bourne:** When is work scheduled to start on the Duffryn link of the Newport southern distributor road? (WAQ38678)

**Andrew Davies:** Newport City Council has developed a proposal for the Duffryn link as a possible future addition to the southern distributor road. There are no plans to begin work on the scheme.

### **Safety Assessments on Roads in Mid Wales**

**Nick Bourne:** Does the Minister plan to carry out safety assessments on any road in mid Wales during the next six months? (WAQ38679)

**Andrew Davies:** All trunk roads within mid Wales are subject to monthly safety inspections and a more detailed annual safety inspection, which is carried out on foot. In addition to these we have other programme assessments, such as skid resistance testing, which help to inform and prioritise our resurfacing programmes.

General accident patterns are monitored and appropriate action taken if clusters develop. Any fatal accident is the subject of detailed investigation to determine whether the road condition or alignment may have been a contributory factor in the accident. Over and above this, my engineers and the various trunk road agencies look proactively at our network to identify areas where resources should be employed to improve safety and hence reduce the risk of future accidents. All of the above assessments are aimed at maintaining and improving road safety.

### **The A479 Between Talgarth and Crickhowell**

**Nick Bourne:** Are there any plans to improve the A479 between Talgarth and Crickhowell? (WAQ38680)

**Andrew Davies:** Construction is planned to start in spring 2005 on the A479 Talgarth relief road/A438 Bronllys bypass scheme subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures. The inspector's report following the recent public local inquiry is expected shortly. There are currently no other improvements planned.

### **Modernisation of IT Systems in the WDA and the WTB**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the Minister make a statement on the modernisation of information technology systems in the WDA and the Wales Tourist Board? (WAQ38718)

**Andrew Davies:** The WDA and the WTB have policies of maintaining their information and communication technology infrastructure on an ongoing basis, consistent with business needs and developing technical standards.

Future developments will fall under an ICT specialist workstream group established as part of the mergers scoping project (to merge the WDA, the WTB and Education and Learning Wales with the Welsh Assembly Government). Its purpose is to gather facts and information on how work is currently organised and to identify potential opportunities. The findings of the project will be presented to Ministers in early November.

## **Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning**

### **The Chair and Chief Executive of the Wales Youth Agency**

**Michael German:** When did the Minister last meet the chair and chief executive of the Wales Youth Agency? (WAQ38641)

**The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson):** I met the chair of the Wales Youth Agency, Gerald Davies MBE, in December 2002. The chief executive, Brian Williams, was not present due to illness. I also have attended the annual Youth Excellence Awards at which I meet both the chair and the chief executive of the agency. I am due to attend the next ceremony on 1 November in the company of the acting chair, Dr Howard Williamson, and the acting chief executive, John Rose.

### **Schools in Flintshire that Provide Out-of-hours Learning to Pupils and their Communities**

**Carl Sargeant:** Could you identify those schools in Flintshire that provide out-of-hours learning to pupils and their communities? (WAQ38650)

**Jane Davidson:** This information is not held centrally but should be available from Flintshire local education authority.

### **The Introduction of Some Form of Top-up Fee in 2007**

**Janet Ryder:** Given the Minister's stated intention to introduce some form of top-up fee in 2007, will she state whether this will apply to all students studying at that time in higher education in Wales? (WAQ38651)

**Jane Davidson:** No decision has yet been taken on whether variable fees will be introduced in Wales after 2006-07. This is one of the issues currently under consideration by the Rees group, which is due to report its findings early next year.

### **Alerting Students about the Requirement to Pay Fees as of 2007**

**Janet Ryder:** Will the Minister publish any advice or guidance that she has issued to higher education institutions in Wales to aid them in preparing their prospectuses for the academic year 2006, alerting students about the requirement to pay fees as of 2007? (WAQ38652)

**Jane Davidson:** No such guidance has been issued. No decision has yet been taken on whether variable fees will be introduced in Wales after 2006-07.

### **The Requirement to Pay Top-up Fees from 2007**

**Janet Ryder:** How does the Minister intend to alert all students who are thinking of applying to higher education institutions in Wales in 2005 that there will be a requirement to pay top-up fees from 2007? (WAQ38653)

**Jane Davidson:** No decision has yet been made on whether variable fees will be introduced in Wales after 2006-07. The Assembly Government's decision on this matter will be communicated to all those with an interest in due course.

### **Asset Management Plans and Maintenance Backlog**

**Peter Black:** When was an asset management plan last completed by each of the 22 local education authorities? (WAQ38659)

**Peter Black:** What was the Minister's estimate of the schools' maintenance backlog? (WAQ38660)

**Jane Davidson:** All local authorities in Wales have produced an asset management plan for all their corporate assets apart from their housing stock. Authorities worked to a completion date of 1 April 2004.

My officials will be requesting the data on schools in the plans. This will provide a picture of the investment required in existing buildings.

### **A Lifelong Learning Campus in Merthyr Tydfil**

**Huw Lewis:** Will the Minister provide an update on the provision of a lifelong learning campus in Merthyr Tydfil? (WAQ38662)

**Jane Davidson:** At present, the establishment of a lifelong learning campus in Merthyr Tydfil is the subject of a scoping study being funded by ELWa through the learning challenge fund. The purpose of the study is to investigate the potential for raising demand and interest in learning and training through integrated holistic learning provision within Merthyr Tydfil. The study, which began in June 2004 and is due to report by April 2006, will deliver a report to ELWa covering proposals for the integrated elements of a lifelong learning campus and an improvement programme for learning within Merthyr Tydfil, accompanied by a draft implementation programme.

The programme of activity is primarily research based, with the major outcome being to develop a detailed analysis of learning within Merthyr Tydfil and an assessment of the future learning needs of business and the local community.

Project milestones have largely been achieved within the timescales specified. A project advisory group and project team have been established, as has a website.

### **The Cost of the Minister's Visit to New Zealand in August/September 2004**

**Nick Bourne:** Will the Minister provide full details of the cost of her visit to New Zealand in August/September 2004, including the number of Assembly Government officials and other staff who accompanied her? (WAQ38681)

**Jane Davidson:** The cost of my visit to New Zealand was £12,614. This does not include costs incurred for taxis and car hire: we have not yet received the account for this service. My private secretary and one policy official accompanied me on this visit.

### **The Curriculum Cymreig**

**Leighton Andrews:** Will the Minister make a statement on the Curriculum Cymreig? (WAQ38684)

**Jane Davidson:** The Curriculum Cymreig—the Welsh dimension in the school curriculum—is a vital ingredient in the development of an increasingly distinctive and different curriculum in Wales.

The common requirements of the National Curriculum already provide that 'pupils should be given opportunities to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales'. Opportunities to develop the Curriculum Cymreig are highlighted throughout most of the programmes of study for National Curriculum subjects in Wales.

However, as Estyn reported three years ago, while there was widespread support for the concept of a distinctive curriculum and there were many examples of good practice, there was a considerable variation in the quality of planning for the Curriculum Cymreig both between schools and within subjects in individual schools. Estyn also found there to be significant regional variation in the quality of

planning for it, and a perception among many schools in the English-medium sector that it is an almost exclusively Welsh-medium issue.

This perception cannot be right. It is a common requirement that all schools should be delivering. The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales guidance, 'Developing the Curriculum Cymreig', published last year, includes case studies of good practice that will help schools to develop a better understanding of it, and how to develop and deliver it in their own locality and community. I had the pleasure of launching the guidance in September 2003.

The introduction to ACCAC's guidance encapsulates what the Curriculum Cymreig is all about: 'A Curriculum Cymreig helps pupils to understand and celebrate the distinctive quality of living and learning in Wales in the twenty-first century, to identify their own sense of Welshness and to feel a heightened sense of belonging to their local community and country. It also helps to foster in pupils an understanding of an outward-looking and international Wales, promoting global citizenship and concern for sustainable development. But it is the degree of commitment to a Curriculum Cymreig that determines its success. This commitment should arise from a realisation that the Welsh experience, in all its aspects, can provide an invaluable opportunity to extend the educational experience for all pupils in Wales'.

The Curriculum Cymreig is not confined to statutory schooling. The Welsh baccalaureate core requires students to study 'Wales, Europe and the World', which will give them a sophisticated understanding of Welshness and place it in a wider international context.

As part of its remit for 2004-05, I have asked Estyn to provide advice on the implementation by schools of the ACCAC guidance. Initially, this will be a position paper but, subject to consideration of Estyn's findings, it may be followed up by a fuller survey report in 2005-06.

On 4 November, I shall be giving the keynote speech at a conference organised by ACCAC in Llandrindod Wells to give further prominence to the Curriculum Cymreig, particularly in English-medium primary schools.

### **The Welsh Baccalaureate**

**Leighton Andrews:** Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh baccalaureate? (WAQ38685)

**Jane Davidson:** The Welsh baccalaureate qualification delivers on a key commitment of the Assembly Government and provides students with an exciting, distinctive and proudly Welsh qualification specifically tailored to meet the modern needs of pupils in Wales.

The Welsh baccalaureate emphasises the importance of learning by doing, with students having the opportunity to participate in enriching experiences that equip them with the skills to progress into further and higher education, training and employment. The core programme delivers breadth, covering key

skills such as personal and social education, work-related education, 'Wales, Europe and the World', community participation, work experience and a language module.

Initially, the Welsh baccalaureate qualification is being piloted at level 2 (intermediate) and level 3 (advanced) of the national qualifications framework. A level 1 (foundation) Welsh baccalaureate has always been a possible extension to the pilot baccalaureate. The draft budget announced last week makes provision for that development.

Eighteen pilot centres across Wales commenced the Welsh baccalaureate in September 2003. A second cohort of six pilot centres started their course from September 2004 and a third cohort of a further seven centres are now preparing to start from September 2005.

This is a real pilot, allowing time for lessons to be learned and for adjustments to be made to the model. It will be evaluated before a decision on whether the Welsh baccalaureate should be rolled out from September 2007. However, feedback after the first year of the pilot is positive. The results for the first cohort of students entered for the Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma were also very encouraging. After just one year's study, 13 students successfully completed the full requirements of the intermediate diploma and all of the candidates made significant progress towards completing those requirements. Between them the 101 candidates have achieved well over 300 key skills qualifications.

Students doing the Welsh baccalaureate want to know that their qualifications will be valued. I was, therefore, delighted when the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service decided, in September 2003, to award the Welsh baccalaureate core at advanced level a tariff points value of 120 points, which is equivalent to an A grade A level. The UCAS value is also an important benchmark against which employers and universities that do not make points offers to prospective students can judge the value of the Welsh baccalaureate core.

On 18 October, the final report from Mike Tomlinson's working group on 14 to 19 reform in England was published. I was delighted to see the extent to which that report mirrors what we are already doing here in Wales, including the Welsh baccalaureate qualification. The Welsh baccalaureate model is flexible and I am confident that qualification developments arising from Tomlinson can be designed so that they fit into our model as well as into any Tomlinson diploma. As Charles Clarke said in welcoming the Tomlinson report, any changes to qualifications will need to be worked through jointly across the education departments and their regulatory authorities.

### **The Education Maintenance Allowance**

**David Davies:** What arrangements are there to ensure that 17 and 18-year-olds do not lose out on the education maintenance allowance which is currently paid to 16-year-olds? (WAQ38688)

**David Davies:** Why was the decision taken to make education maintenance allowance available to the youngest end of the sixth form and not the older? (WAQ38687)

**Jane Davidson:** Young people become eligible for the education maintenance allowance at age 16 because that is the age at which they can first decide whether to remain in full-time education or training. The aim of the scheme is to help remove the financial obstacles that prevent some people from deciding to do so. In subsequent years, the scheme will be extended to 17 and 18-year-olds.

### **Information about Co-operatives in the Welsh School Curriculum**

**Lorraine Barrett:** What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to include information about co-operatives in the Welsh school curriculum? (WAQ38721)

**Jane Davidson:** There is no specific reference to co-operatives in the national curriculum. However, the programme of study for history at key stage 3 requires the study of nineteenth and early twentieth century history from a range of different perspectives and provides opportunities for schools to study both the co-operative movement and the life and work of Robert Owen. Many schools take these opportunities.

Students studying the Welsh Joint Education Committee's GCSE topics such as 'Popular Movements in Wales and England, 1815-1845' will also be expected to know of Robert Owen's work, while those studying later topics such as 'Depression, War and Recovery, 1930-1951' would also have opportunities to look at the influence of the co-operative movement. Students of WJEC AS/A2 history will also study Robert Owen's work as part of an optional in-depth study of 'Reform and Protest in Wales and England, c. 1830-1848'. Again, students following an in-depth study of 'Change and Conflict in Wales, c.1900-1914' or 'Britain, c. 1929-1939', or a period study of 'Aspects of the History of Wales and England, c. 1815-1914' would have opportunities to study the co-operative movement as part of their work. However, these requirements are not specifically cited in the GCSE or A level specifications. Co-operatives may also feature within aspects of personal and social education. These are matters primarily for teachers' judgement rather than prescription.

ACCAC will be reviewing the curriculum with a view to implementing a revised version from September 2008.

### **Promoting Young Co-operatives to Schools in Wales**

**Lorraine Barrett:** What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to promote Young Co-operatives to schools in Wales? (WAQ38722)

**Jane Davidson:** Promotion of co-operatives forms part of the Assembly Government's wider agenda to develop a sustainable social economy and regenerate our communities. While the Assembly Government is not promoting co-operatives directly to young people, schools and youth groups in Wales are eligible to join the Young Co-operatives UK programme. This programme introduces a new generation to the ethical benefits and principles of co-operation, through a practical combination of co-

operative enterprise, fair trade and business skills.

## **The Modernisation of Information Technology Systems in ELWa**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the Minister make a statement on the modernisation of information technology systems in ELWa? (WAQ38724)

**Jane Davidson:** Recent information and communications technology developments at ELWa include the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Wales Record System linked to learning provision and achievement, the European Database Management System to improve the management of European funding and a system to support individual learning accounts. There are plans to introduce an electronic documents and records system in the near future.

An ICT specialist work-stream group has been established as part of the mergers scoping project—to merge ELWa, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board with the Welsh Assembly Government. Its purpose is to gather facts and information on how work is currently organised and to identify potential opportunities and the group's findings will, therefore, help to inform how the merger is to be taken forward.

## **Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside**

### **The Modernisation of IT Systems in Executive ASPBs**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the Minister make a statement on the modernisation of information technology systems in executive ASPBs covered by his portfolio? (WAQ38719)

**The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones):** The Assembly is grant aiding in Wales the implementation of the Environment Agency's information technology modernisation project to help direct the agency's efforts to achieve maximum environmental effect, identify best practice and improve access to and services of information to customers. The Countryside Council for Wales is currently reviewing its ICT strategy to create a plan which will move it forward in the support of e-government in Wales.

## **Questions to the Finance Minister**

### **The Standard Spending Assessment for Personal Social Services**



**Michael German:** Will the Minister please provide a set of the detailed figures behind the prospective changes to the standard spending assessment for personal social services and will she provide the exemplified changes by criteria and by local authority? (WAQ38643)

**The Finance Minister (Sue Essex):** The data for the 2005-06 standard spending assessments will be published in the background information for standard spending assessments—commonly known as the ‘green book’. I expect to publish this early in the new year. It is an annual publication, which contains details of the formulae used in the calculations and all data.

### **The Restriction of Limiting Tender**

**Alun Cairns:** What impact does the restriction of limiting tender to companies where the contract with the Welsh Assembly Government or its agencies is valued at less than 40 per cent of the turnover of small and medium-sized enterprises? (WAQ38708)

**Sue Essex:** It is important that contractual arrangements between the Assembly and its suppliers continue to be on a sound basis in terms of capability, capacity and financial soundness. However, we recognise that the 40 per cent rule restricts suppliers from access to the full range of contracts. The Assembly is currently reviewing the 40 per cent rule.

### **The Purpose of Limiting Companies Applying for a Contract**

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister make a statement on the purpose of limiting companies applying for a contract with the Welsh Assembly Government or its agencies, which is valued at more than 40 per cent of the company’s turnover? (WAQ38709)

**Sue Essex:** The Assembly wishes to ensure that suppliers have the necessary financial standing and resources to meet their obligations throughout the duration of a contract. The 40 per cent rule has served this end. However, its clarity and simplicity of understanding means that it does not necessarily address all suppliers individual situations. The Assembly is, therefore, reviewing the 40 per cent rule to ensure that suppliers have the opportunity to contract with the Assembly when their capability and capacity would allow this.

### **Assembly Procurement Rules**

**Alun Cairns:** Would the Minister make a statement on Assembly procurement rules? (WAQ38710)

**Sue Essex:** The National Assembly for Wales is committed to establishing a consistent and uniform approach to all procurement and supply activities. To this end, staff involved in procurement must follow uniform principles and procedures, in a manner that is ethical, accountable and compliant with procedural, legal, Assembly principles such as sustainability and international obligations. In addition, they must carry out their procurement activities and not only undertake procurement in a fair and open

manner, but be seen to be so. That means being fair to potential suppliers, meeting the needs of the Assembly most cost-effectively, and at the same time, maintaining a complete audit trail to ensure that staff involved in purchasing are protected against any allegation of prejudice or malpractice.

### **The 40 per cent Turnover Rule**

**Alun Cairns:** In view of the fact that in Scotland and England there is no clause to exclude companies from contracts with a value of more than 40 per cent of their turnover, what consideration has the Minister given to reviewing the policy in Wales? (WAQ38714)

**Sue Essex:** I am currently reviewing the 40 per cent turnover rule and will be announcing the outcome of the review in November. In line with the Office of Government Commerce's best practice guidelines, equal weighting will be given to financial viability and technical capacity when assessing expressions of interest. A risk assessment will be undertaken for each contract, and an appropriate percentage applied.

### **IT Modernisation in Local Government**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the Minister make a statement on the modernisation of information technology in local government? (WAQ38717)

**Sue Essex:** The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for the modernisation of information technology in local government is set out in Cymru Ar-lein. This states that the Welsh Assembly Government will, through its partnerships and agreements with local authorities, encourage the use of information and communications technology to deliver first-class public services across Wales. An objective of Cymru Ar-lein is that wherever practicable and achievable, local authorities will use ICT to provide accessible, friendly, bilingual and citizen-centred services better, faster and more cheaply.

As part of this strategy, a review was carried out by Assembly Government officials into the use of ICT—more popularly known as e-government—in local government and a report was submitted to the Local Government Partnership Council in February 2004. This report stated that:

- based on their customer surveys local authorities are, as a priority, establishing both telephone contact centres and face-to-face customer contact centres, the latter often at high street locations. Their aim is to provide a single point of contact for a range of local authority services. In improving these access channels partnership working with other agencies, such as social services and health, is also taking place in areas such as data sharing,
- all local authorities are now making clearer links between their e-government activity and their core business and improvement plans. These plans vary between authorities both in terms of scope and organisational and cultural impact. The majority of authorities are taking a staged approach, upgrading key IT systems, piloting certain key technologies and participating, wherever possible, in national initiatives such as the Wales broadband programme and procurement initiative.

A Cymru Ar-lein action for local authorities is to incorporate e-government into the Wales Programme for Improvement. This has been strongly encouraged by the Assembly Government, as we have negotiated with each local authority, their policy agreement covering the period from 2004-07. Under the theme of creating better jobs and skills, a number of authorities have agreed to specific measures to modernise their IT systems to improve the delivery of their services, and to widen access via authority-owned facilities.

### **The Changes in Revenue Support Grant**

**Michael German:** Will the Minister publish the changes in revenue support grant that will accrue to each of the 22 county councils on a like-for-like basis as a result of how revaluation changes their council tax base? (WAQ38723)

**Sue Essex:** The changes in allocations of revenue support grant for 2005-06 compared with their allocation for the current year will be published as part of the provisional settlement. That analysis will take into account an estimate of the revalued taxbase of each authority along with other changes resulting from formula and data changes. More accurate details of the changes to the council tax base following revaluation will be collected on the council tax returns due to be returned in November and will be reflected in the publication of the final settlement. We will be able to provide an analysis of how revaluation has impacted on the allocation of revenue support grant across the 22 county councils.

## **Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services**

### **Capital Spend on NHS Equipment**

**Jonathan Morgan:** What was the capital spend on equipment in the NHS for each financial year since 1997? (WAQ38230)

*Substantive answer following holding reply.*

**The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt):** Including only items in excess of £5,000, the capital spend on equipment in NHS Wales since 1997 is as follows:

	£ million
<b>2003-04</b>	<b>21.0</b>
<b>2002-03</b>	<b>32.3</b>

<b>2001-02</b>	<b>37.7</b>
<b>2000-01</b>	<b>27.1</b>
<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>31.6</b>
<b>1998-99</b>	<b>20.6</b>
<b>1997-98</b>	<b>21.3</b>

Source: NHS Wales summarised accounts.

1. Figures for 2003-04 are unaudited,
2. equipment expenditure is defined as capital for items costing more than £5,000 with a life exceeding one year,
3. equipment expenditure comprises plant and machinery, transport equipment, information technology and furniture and fittings.

### **Capital Spend on Hospitals in Wales**

**Jonathan Morgan:** What was the capital spend on hospitals in Wales for each financial year since 1997? (WAQ38231)

*Substantive answer following holding reply.*

**Jane Hutt:** The capital spend on hospitals in the NHS Wales for each financial year since 1999-2000 is listed below.

	£ million
<b>2003-04</b>	<b>46.826</b>
<b>2002-03</b>	<b>52.221</b>
<b>2001-02</b>	<b>61.015</b>
<b>2000-01</b>	<b>15.739</b>
<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>55.162</b>

Information for the financial years immediately preceding 1999-2000 is not centrally held.

## **Neurological Therapy Services (Self-referral Systems)**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** How is the Minister promoting good practice of self-referral systems of diagnosed patients for neurological therapy services across Wales? (WAQ38241)

*Substantive answer following holding reply.*

**Jane Hutt:** The Assembly's innovations in care team develop and implement numerous initiatives to improve access to services across NHS Wales and to promote the sharing of good practice. Of the initiatives currently in place, none specifically focuses on self-referral systems for diagnosed patients in relation to neurological therapy services. However, the innovations in care team is always researching examples of good practice across the sector and can address new or changing priorities as they arise.

## **Voluntary Groups**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What guidance has been made available for voluntary groups who provide a valuable service at a national or regional basis that covers more than one local health board area, to help them access funding and secure service agreements with the various local health boards? (WAQ38452)

*Substantive answer following holding reply.*

**Jane Hutt:** Although there is no formal guidance available on this matter, national policy is to ensure that the voluntary sector participates fully in planning and developing a strategy that is a fundamental part of the commissioning process. The Welsh Assembly Government has devolved planning and commissioning of most services to local level. All local health boards are basing their planning and commissioning on their local health needs assessment which is helping to determine their local priorities within their community. In addition, Health Commission Wales is responsible for the national commissioning of a defined set of services.

The voluntary sector representatives on LHBs, together with the voluntary sector local health and social care facilitators should help inform LHBs of the service of national voluntary sector providers and should encourage open and shared commissioning arrangements where appropriate.

## **The Chair and Chief Executive of the Wales Youth Agency**

**Michael German:** When did the Minister last meet the chair and chief executive of the Wales Youth Agency? (WAQ38642)

**Jane Hutt:** I have never met the chair and chief executive of the Wales Youth Agency in an official capacity.

## **Organisations Representing Individuals with Learning Disabilities**

**Sandy Mewies:** When did the Minister hold the last meeting with organisations representing individuals with learning disabilities? (WAQ38645)

**Jane Hutt:** I meet or visit such organisations on a fairly regular basis. My most recent meeting was when I met with the director of Mencap Cymru on 20 September.

### **Groups Representing Individuals with Learning Disabilities**

**Sandy Mewies:** Does the Welsh Assembly Government consult with groups representing individuals with learning disabilities? (WAQ38646)

**Jane Hutt:** I consult with all-Wales organisations representing people with a learning disability including All Wales People First, Mencap Cymru, the Downs Syndrome Association and the National Autistic Society.

In addition, I have also established the learning disability implementation advisory group to advise me on the implementation of our responses to the 'Fulfilling the Promises' report and other learning disability issues. Membership of this advisory group is drawn from a wide range of learning disability interests.

### **Accessing Health and Social Services (People with Learning Disabilities)**

**Sandy Mewies:** Could the Minister identify Welsh Assembly Government initiatives that enable people with learning disabilities to access health and social services in Wales? (WAQ38647)

**Jane Hutt:** People with learning disabilities will benefit from a range of initiatives that I am pursuing across my portfolio. Such initiatives include Health Challenge Wales and its related inequalities in health fund, the development and implementation of local health, social care and wellbeing strategies and Wanless local action plans.

There is also the action that we are taking to implement our responses to the 'Fulfilling the Promises' report. In August, I published guidance to local authorities setting out the service principles and service responses that should be adopted for adults with a learning disability. Local authorities working with voluntary organisations, users and carers are now undertaking local audits of their current arrangements against this guidance and will be submitting to the Assembly their local change action plans by the end of October. I have made available £7.4 million in new grant funding over three years to assist with the implementation of these local action plans.

### **The Mencap Report—'Treat me right!'**

**Sandy Mewies:** Will the Minister make a statement regarding the Mencap report, 'Treat me right!'? (WAQ38648)

**Jane Hutt:** This report concerns the quality of routine medical services received by patients with a learning disability on a day-to-day basis and makes a number of recommendations for improvements. I welcome the contribution that it makes to the debate on this important issue.

### **Advocacy Services in Swansea**

**Val Lloyd:** Will the Minister provide information on advocacy services in Swansea? (WAQ38654)

**Jane Hutt:** An independent advocacy service for those wishing to make a complaint about NHS services is already available from local community health councils across Wales, including in Swansea. This is accessible to adults and children.

From 1 June 2004, children in need, including those looked after, disabled and care leavers have statutory right to an advocacy service when making a representation or complaint to a local authority social services department, and each local authority has a contract with an advocacy provider for children. We also fund Childline Wales to operate a national helpline.

For children and young people we have pledged to ensure that they have access to advocacy services in health, social care and education settings and have set up an advocacy unit and task group to deliver on the agenda.

Local advocacy services for children and young people in Swansea are provided by the local authority under contract to NSPCC. The local health board and NHS trust are piloting a scheme with Tros Gynnal to provide advocacy and engagement services for children at Swansea's Singleton and Morriston hospitals, children's wards and in local community clinical settings.

As part of its response to 'Fulfilling the Promises', the Welsh Assembly Government has introduced an advocacy grant scheme to assist local advocacy groups working with adults with a learning disability. This grant scheme is administered on behalf of the Assembly by the British Institute for Learning Disabilities. Grant resources of £925,000 are being made available over the three years 2003-04 to 2005-06. An organisation based in Swansea benefiting from this scheme is Swansea People First for its person-centred peer health advocacy project.

### **Babies with Gastroschisis**

**Leighton Andrews:** Will the Minister make a statement on the number of cases of babies with gastroschisis since 2001? (WAQ38661)

**Jane Hutt:** The Welsh Congenital Anomaly Register and Information Service collects and publishes

information on birth anomalies in Wales under a service level agreement with the Welsh Assembly Government.

In 2004, concerns were raised by clinicians in south Wales that they were seeing increased numbers of babies with gastroschisis, and at the same time CARIS advised of an increase in reporting of cases for 2003 and 2004. Initial investigations suggested that cases might be focused in certain areas of the south Wales Valleys. In May 2004, an expert group convened by CARIS agreed that further investigation was required into a potential local cluster of cases. Investigation to date has involved discussions between clinical staff and the mothers of babies in their care, consideration of potential environmental exposures and further descriptive epidemiology.

CARIS has linked with other regional congenital anomaly registers in the UK to establish whether any rise in cases was confined to Wales or was part of a more widespread occurrence. Further scrutiny is required to ensure that no local factors have been overlooked, and in due course, a full report on all local investigations to date will be produced. The expert group has recently agreed that there is increasing evidence to suggest that the potential local cluster in south Wales may be part of a wider occurrence that has affected other areas of the UK during 2003 and 2004. Should this prove to be the case, further very localised investigation of a relatively small number of cases would not be the best way to investigate the current situation.

The British Isles Network of Congenital Anomaly Registers discussed data from regional congenital anomaly registers at a meeting on 4 October 2004 and agreed to set up a working group to monitor levels of gastroschisis across the UK, where registers exist to supply data.

The table below shows the number of cases of gastroschisis by year in which pregnancy ended. Data show a rise in rates in 2003, although this difference is not statistically significant.

Numbers of cases of gastroschisis among babies of mothers normally resident in Wales and reported to CARIS by year of end of pregnancy

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>Total cases reported for year</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>

### **The Noah's Ark Appeal**

**Nick Bourne:** What discussions has the Minister held with the Noah's Ark appeal about funding a new children's hospice for Wales? (WAQ38676)

**Jane Hut:** I have regular meetings with the trustees of the Noah's Ark appeal concerning the proposed children's hospital for Wales, phase 1A of which is being funded from charitable donations via the



appeal. I have had no discussions with the Noah's Ark appeal about funding a new children's hospice in Wales.

### **The Summit Meeting of Carers and Associated Partners**

**Sandy Mewies:** What progress has the Minister made convening the summit meeting of carers and associated partners as mentioned in the response to the short debate of 16 June 2004? (WAQ38682)

**Jane Hutt:** The views of the carers' strategy review panel on the proposed conference have been obtained and officials are presently discussing the detailed arrangements with Carers Wales. It is likely that the conference will be held in the early spring to tie in with the commencement of the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004.

### **New Health and Social Care Facility in Monmouth**

**Michael German:** Will the Minister make a statement on the steps she is taking to ensure that the final business case for the new health and social care facility at Monmouth receives Ministerial approval by 30 November 2004? (WAQ38683)

**Jane Hutt:** This case, which has only recently been presented to the Assembly, will be dealt with as quickly as possible while ensuring adequate rigour.

### **Additional £45 million for Health Promotion and Health Improvement**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What will the announced additional £45 million for health promotion and health improvement be spent on, and in which budget line is this included? (WAQ38689)

**Jane Hutt:** The additional £45 million comprises £24.5 million over the two years from 2006-07 within the health promotion budget. This additional funding demonstrates our commitment to invest in more action to prevent ill health as part of Health Challenge Wales, the development of which was announced earlier this year. The funding will extend the reach of our existing programmes to help more people to take steps to improve their health. The precise details will be announced in due course but will include action through schools, workplaces and communities.

There is also an extra £19.5 million for health improvement. This includes a £2.25 million increase over three years for the health inequalities fund budget. This will enable the fund to continue to support action at grass roots level, which is making a real difference to the health of people in disadvantaged communities. The remaining £17.25 million over three years will be used for research and development focused at improving patient services.

### **Improvements in Social Care**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Can you detail what improvements in social care will the announced additional £50 million be spent on, and in which budget line is this included? (WAQ38690)

**Jane Hutt:** By 2007-08 provision in the flexible care and joint working budget expenditure line increases from its 2004-05 level of £31.7 million to £83.7 million, an increase of £52 million. The 2004-05 baseline figure includes the extra £19.5 million in the form of the capacity grant made available from this year.

The additional funding is intended to help local authorities to address pressures in the health and social care system, including supporting more people to be cared for at home and in communities and the costs associated with meeting higher standards of care.

### **Number of People Sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 Annually**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** How many people have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 annually over the past three years, and will the Minister detail under which category they were sectioned? (WAQ38691)

**Jane Hutt:** This information is available on the internet at

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwalesheadline/content/health/2004/hdw20040922-e.htm>.

Table 2.1 attached to that page details the number of patients sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983, and under which category they were sectioned.

### **Number of People Currently Receiving Compulsory Mental Health Treatment**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** How many people are currently receiving compulsory mental health treatment in Wales, and how does this compare with the number of people receiving compulsory mental health care in Wales? (WAQ38692)

**Jane Hutt:** This information is available on the internet at

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwalesheadline/content/health/2004/hdw200409222-e.htm>.

Table 16, attached to that page, details the number of people currently receiving compulsory mental health treatment and mental health care in Wales.

### **Funding Available for IT**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What funding has the Minister made available for IT in her budget, and in which

budget line is this included? (WAQ38693)

**Jane Hutt:** The programme to implement the ‘Informing Healthcare’ strategy was launched in December 2003. ‘Informing Healthcare’ supports the modernisation of health services in Wales. A sum of £36 million—£30 million revenue and £6 million capital—has been made available in 2005-06 recurrently to achieve this.

The ‘Informing Healthcare’ budget is located in the local health boards and trusts and central budget revenue budget expenditure line.

### **Funding Available for Refurbishing GP Surgeries**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What funding has the Minister made available for refurbishing GP surgeries in her budget and in which budget line is this included? (WAQ38695)

**Jane Hutt:** A Primary Care Estate Forum has been set up to consider funding for improvements and extensions to current premises and all new development proposals requiring capital or revenue moneys. A centrally held budget of £9.3 million is available in the payments to contractors budget expenditure line for 2004-05. A further £16.4 million is available in 2005-06. Bids received for funding will be considered against a number of criteria, including their priority within the local health boards estate strategies.

### **Funding for Refurbishing Dental Surgeries**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What funding has the Minister made available for refurbishing dental surgeries in her budget and in which budget line is this included? (WAQ38696)

**Jane Hutt:** The Welsh Dental Initiative includes a component where grants are available to encourage NHS general dental practitioners to establish training practices to employ vocational trainees in designated areas. Part of the grant includes a limited refurbishment element to assist the practitioner in equipping a surgery in order to accommodate the trainee.

The Welsh Dental Initiative sits within the local health board’s and trusts central budget revenue expenditure budget expenditure line.

### **The Mental Health Bill Requirements**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Will the Minister make a statement on how the requirements of the Mental Health Bill fit in with the Wanless recommendations and the national service framework? (WAQ38703)

**Jane Hutt:** The Mental Health Bill will only apply to patients who are assessed as requiring treatment under compulsion. For those particularly vulnerable people, the introduction of statutory individual care

plans, advocacy, treatment in the setting most appropriate to their needs and automatic access to an independent tribunal is to be welcomed, and could be seen as being consistent with the general thrust of the Wanless recommendations and the adult mental health services national service framework.

One of the principles behind the NSF is that services should be available according to individual need. The evidence heard at the recent Health and Social Services Committee, however, suggested that Welsh stakeholders believe that the conditions contained in the Bill could lead to a focus of activity upon statutory work and that this would be at the expense of the care and treatment of voluntary patients. I intend to raise this issue in my response to the Pre-legislative Scrutiny Committee.

### **The Requirements of the Mental Health Bill**

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Will the Minister make a statement on the requirements of the Mental Health Bill with regard to sharing information on service users between public bodies? (WAQ38704)

**Jane Hutt:** The provisions regarding information sharing in the Mental Health Bill only apply to people who are subject to compulsion, and are aimed at improving communication between authorities for the benefit of the person, rather than the system.

It is important that information is shared appropriately and the Bill makes this clear by requiring clinical supervisors to consult with patients about providing information, unless impracticable, and that the information should be relevant to any assessment of risk to patients or others. In addition, the Bill requires that reasons for wanting the requested information are set out, with reasons also given if the specified information is not provided.

The Bill also makes it clear that information may only be shared in accordance with statute and common law, but should help to reduce any misunderstandings people may have regarding the rules governing confidentiality and the sharing of information.

### **Improving the Lives of Disabled Children and their Parents**

**Lynne Neagle:** What steps is the Minister taking to improve the lives of disabled children and their parents in Wales? (WAQ38706)

**Jane Hutt:** The Children First programme, under which £100 million has been distributed as grant since 1999, has as one of its objectives the improvement of services for disabled children and their families. Last week, I issued the national service framework for children, young people and maternity services for consultation. The draft NSF sets specific standards for the services provided to disabled children and their families.

To increase opportunities for independent living and choice from 1 November, local authorities have new duties to offer direct payment to people who are potentially eligible to receive them, including

younger disabled people—16 to 17 year-olds—and families caring for disabled children.

## **The Modernisation of NHS Wales IT Systems**

**Carl Sargeant:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the modernisation of NHS Wales IT systems? (WAQ38716)

**Jane Hutt:** The modernisation of NHS Wales IT systems is taking place under the strategic umbrella of ‘Informing Healthcare’, which is a 10-year change management strategy designed to transform health services delivery in Wales through the introduction of modern information and communications technology and the new ways of working and new ways of managing information that it can support. Funding of £91 million has been identified for its first three years of operation.

## **Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration**

### **Voluntary Organisations that work with Children and Young People**

**Laura Anne Jones:** Would the Minister make a statement on voluntary organisations that work with children and young people across Wales? (WAQ38606) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.*

*Substantive answer following holding reply.*

**The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson):** The National Voluntary Youth Organisation grant scheme is administered by the Wales Youth Agency on the Assembly’s behalf and provides management and programme funding to voluntary organisations that work with young people.

The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services is an umbrella organisation, which offers help and advice to its members. The Assembly supports CWVYS by funding its chief executive post.

Voluntary organisations that work with children and young people have designated sector representative on the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.