

Written Questions answered between 19 and 26 October 2006

[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 Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Ann Jones: What criteria are used to determine the quality of public libraries? (WAQ47693)

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): The performance of local authorities in delivering comprehensive and efficient library services is measured by assessing achievements of library authorities against the Welsh public library standards framework, introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The first framework of public library standards: 'Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries for Wales—Standards and Monitoring 2002-05', comprised 23 standards, and delivered the following results across libraries in Wales:

100 per cent improvement in delivering readers' requests promptly and efficiently;

84 per cent improvement in delivering ICT resources and services;

45 per cent increase in expenditure on library materials for public use.

Following the success of the first framework of standards, a second framework of public library standards, 'Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries for Wales: Promoting Higher Service Standards, 2005-08', was introduced. The framework contains 18 standards to ensure that libraries offer services suitable for twenty-first century users.

Also, to ensure that the views of public library users are taken into account, Welsh public library standards 32 states that Welsh public library authorities must conduct a public library user survey on one occasion during the three-year cycle, and that 94 per cent of respondents aged 15 or over rate the library service as 'very good' or 'good'.

Lisa Francis: Further to his answer to WAQ47616, what did these costs relate to specifically and will the Minister provide a breakdown? (WAQ48189) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks.*

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): Between 1 October 2004 and 31 March 2005 the former Welsh Development Agency reimbursed the National Botanic Garden of Wales the maintenance costs of the science centre/bio-technium building at the garden as follows:

Telephone Standing Charges (BT)	£1,311.04
Heating Fuel (Calor Gas Ltd)	£6,921.58
Electricity (SWALEC)	£2,301.27
Meter Operations Charge (Western Power)	£234.48
Security Monitoring (Visual Verification Ltd)	£250.00
Insurance (Culver Insurance Brokers)	£3,254.63
Payroll Costs (Security)	£1,629.00
Total	£15,902.00

Between 1 October 2005 and 31 March 2006 the former WDA reimbursed as follows:

Telephone Standing Charges (BT)	£679.03
Heating Fuel (Calor Gas Ltd)	£4,012.71
Electricity (SWALEC)	£2,333.82
Meter Operations Charge (Western Power)	£235.88
Security Monitoring (Visual Verification Ltd)	£750.00
Insurance (Culver Insurance Brokers)	£2,625.00
Payroll Costs (Security)	£1,647.00
Total	£12,283.44

Questions to the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister state what percentage of Network Rail's spending for the UK has gone and will be going to Wales for each year since its establishment and for years for which future plans are available? (WAQ47759)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 August.

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): Funding of maintenance and steady state renewal of the railway infrastructure is a responsibility for Network Rail. I do not have access to Network Rail's specific spending figures for Wales because it is combined with the spending figure for England.

Network Rail's 'initial strategic business plan' is the beginning of a two-year process to determine the needs of the UK's railway network in the five-year funding period—control period 4—1 April 2009 to 31 March 2014. A submission is made to the Office of Rail Regulation and is part of an iterative process to determine how much money Network Rail will receive to operate, maintain, renew and enhance the nation's rail infrastructure.

There are two sets of figures: the baseline provides an understanding of the efficient minimum cost to run the railway in its present state, with little provision for development and growth. The base-case builds on the baseline plan by suggesting development plans that respond to predicted growth in passenger and freight demand. In line with the funding and output statements that will be issued by government, data is given on an England and Wales (combined), and Scotland basis. The final determination will be published by the Regulator in October 2008. Please refer to the table below for baseline and base-case figures.

Both plans look to deliver almost 18 per cent of efficiencies over the five-year period and will reduce the cost of running railway by more than £4 billion. The figures are not available on a Wales-only basis.

Baseline (efficient minimum costs to the railway) Total for period 2009-10 to 2013-14

Category of Investment	England & Wales (£)	Scotland (£)
Day to day operating, maintenance and renewal costs	£18.129 billion	£2.32 billion
Enhancement costs—new schemes	£1.023 billion	£0.020 billion

Base-case (to meet expected growth demand)

Category of Investment	England & Wales (£)	Scotland (£)
Day to day operating, maintenance and renewal costs	£18.410 billion	£2.365 billion
Enhancement costs – new schemes	£7.003 billion	£0.938 billion

In terms of specific schemes, Network Rail is investing £400 million over the next six years in upgrading the track and modernising the signalling on the south Wales main line between Port Talbot and Severn Tunnel. This scheme will deliver capacity improvements, opportunities for frequency enhancements, better reliability and safety benefits.

Trish Law: Can the Minister confirm whether the Newport spur of the Ebbw Vale/Cardiff/Newport rail link is scheduled for completion in 2009? (WAQ47763)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 August.

Andrew Davies: There is currently insufficient capacity to provide a regular passenger train service to Newport. Works required to remove this constraint include a new cross over point where the Ebbw Line meets the south Wales

main line (the Assembly Government has commissioned Network Rail to provide a costed feasibility study for removing this constraint) signalling alterations in the Park Junction area, the completion of a full length and fully operational platform 4 at Newport station, and the re-signalling of the main line. It is currently anticipated that the earliest all these works will be complete is 2009/early 2010, when Network Rail completes the first stage of the re-signalling of the main line at Newport.

In the meantime the Assembly Government has committed funding for a rail-link bus service between Rogerstone station and Newport station and shopping centre when the Ebbw Vale to Cardiff service starts in 2007.

AFTER 2009-10

When the capacity constraint has been removed the Assembly Government will review the service provision with Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail and in conjunction with the South East Wales Transport Alliance decide the best way to then provide a service into Newport. This process will include consultation with rail users on the service provision and timetable options.

PHASE 2

The scheme has been designed to facilitate enhancements to the line if rail usage and demand justifies further investment. Possible enhancements include the provision of a longer length of double track, which would allow service frequency to be increased from hourly to half hourly and the provision of additional platforms and signalling and stations on the line, including the possible extension of the line into Ebbw Vale itself.

The Assembly Government has not committed any funding to phase 2 works at this time, the relative priority of such works will be assessed as part of the development of the regional transport plan for the SEWTA area and considered in conjunction with those for the rest of Wales.

Future decisions on phase 2 works will be based on this prioritisation process and the availability of funding at that time.

Huw Lewis: What action will the Minister be taking to improve employment opportunities in Merthyr Tydfil, following the recent fall in employment in the borough? (WAQ47770)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 August.

Andrew Davies: Key initiatives and programmes are underway to stimulate higher levels of employment and investment in Merthyr Tydfil.

Substantial investment is planned for the area over the 15-year lifetime of the Heads of the Valleys programme, which I launched this summer. My department is also providing reclamation funding which is helping to create the Trago Mills site for a major new retail and leisure investment, generating significant new employment opportunities.

My department has facilitated other major investments in the town, including the Beacons Place shopping centre and the Cyfartha retail park development, together creating up to 1,000 new jobs.

The Welsh European Funding Office is providing over £2 million in European funding towards a town centre regeneration programme, supported by my regional regeneration team. This will reinforce Merthyr's appeal as a new investment location, while creating, accommodating or safeguarding up to 300 jobs throughout the town.

Construction is due to start this year on the £4.5 million Merthyr Tydfil valleys information technology and communications centre. Supported by WEFO, this joint venture between my department, the local council, and the

private sector will create high-level training and education opportunities for businesses, schools and local people, enabling residents of Merthyr Tydfil to compete for good quality jobs.

Mick Bates: What action is the Minister taking regarding the problem of pollen on the Cambrian line railway? (WAQ48159)

Andrew Davies: Arriva Trains Wales's fleet of class 158 vehicles is susceptible to problems when there are a combination of high temperatures, pollen and demanding gradients on routes such as the Cambrian line.

ATW completed a number of pre-summer radiator cleaning programs in readiness for the pollen season, following similar experience in previous years and I was therefore disappointed to learn that the problem materialised and resulted in disruption to a small number of services. An immediately programme of maintenance to clear the radiators was carried out at ATW's maintenance locations.

Going forward, the focus is on ensuring appropriate actions are in place to mitigate the problem next year. Already this autumn ATW is finalising arrangements to dip every radiator of the Class 158 fleet in an acid bath to ensure that total efficiency of the radiator is achieved from the outset prior to normal pressure washer daily cleaning. ATW is also trialing six finless radiators on the fleet too, with a view, if successful, to rolling out across the fleet for 2008.

In terms of having a dedicated class 158 Cambrian line fleet, this project is on track for May 2007, when ATW's improved train depot is due to open at Machynlleth.

Jocelyn Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of officials that are employed on economic development and transport? (WAQ48164)

Andrew Davies: The current staffing level for the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (formerly Economic Development and Transport) is 1,533 from a pre-merger baseline of 1,653, representing a reduction of 120. These officials are engaged in a broad range of activities in support of our priorities as outlined in 'Wales a Vibrant Economy', our vision for delivering strong and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for all.

Owen John Thomas: Further to your written response to my question WAQ47942 can the Minister confirm that, in a recent meeting with Lorraine Barrett AM, you agreed in principle to extending the deadline for the Vale of Glamorgan's proposed Penarth headland link? (WAQ48180)

Andrew Davies: I refer you to my previous answer of 28 September to WAQ47942.

Nick Bourne: What assessment has the Minister made of Wales's economic prospects? (WAQ48184)

Andrew Davies: I assess Wales's economic prospects on a continuing basis. The most recent published assessment formed part of 'Wales: A Vibrant Economy'.

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister list the top 10 accident blackspots for the last 12 months and the number of incidents

which have occurred? (WAQ48190)

Andrew Davies: The identification, analysis and treatment of collision cluster sites is the responsibility of the relevant highway authority. For non-trunk roads this would be the respective local authority, and therefore this information is not held centrally. For trunk roads this would be the Welsh Assembly Government. The three trunk road agencies are commissioned to annually identify potential sites for collision remedial treatment. This is done for their individual areas utilising data for at least three years. There is therefore no principality-wide list of collision hotspots based on the last 12 months.

The Welsh Assembly Government has provided technical assistance and data to the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP). This Automobile Association Motoring Trust initiative aims to provide an objective measure of safety by assessing roads against established criteria. It allocates safety ratings to roads, based on site features and speed-based risks. A map, which can be found at http://www.aatrust.com/files/reports18052006_Wales.pdf, shows the statistical risk of death or serious injury occurring on Britain's motorways and major roads for 2001-03.

As you will see from the map, the majority of the trunk road routes are in the low, low/medium and medium risk categories, reflecting the frequency of injury collisions relative to the traffic volume on that route. Some of the routes in mid-Wales are in the medium/high risk category and we are working with our agent to implement safety schemes such as new chevrons, road markings and reduced speed limits to lower the frequency of collisions on these routes.

Questions to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Lisa Francis: How many newly-qualified teachers have taken up their first teaching post for each year since 1999 and would the Minister break the figures down for each county council area? (WAQ47885)

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson): The following table presents the number of Welsh domiciled students known to be in a teaching post after completing initial teacher training at UK higher education institutions.

These statistics are based on those graduates who responded to a survey of destinations around six months after qualifying. Therefore the figures below do not include ITT qualifiers in teaching posts who did not respond to the survey. The response rate to this survey has fallen over the period from nearly 90 per cent in 1998-99 to just under 80 per cent in 2004-05. Therefore any changes in the numbers known to be in a teaching post may be affected by this change in response rate.

The table has been presented, for consistency with WAQ47884, based on the domicile of the student prior to entry to higher education, and not where they are teaching. It should also be noted that information on whether the teaching post is the graduate's first teaching post is not available.

Welsh-domiciled students known to be in a teaching post after completing ITT at UK Higher Education Institutions by LEA of original domicile and year of completion (a)

	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Isle of Anglesey	40	30	40	40	20	30	30
Gwynedd	80	70	90	75	25	55	65
Conwy	40	55	45	40	30	35	40
Denbighshire	45	40	40	25	25	45	40
Flintshire	50	45	55	65	50	50	70

Wrexham	40	50	35	55	50	50	40
Powys	65	45	60	50	50	60	45
Ceredigion	40	30	45	35	35	55	30
Pembrokeshire	40	50	50	60	40	55	55
Carmarthenshire	80	95	90	120	105	75	110
Swansea	95	105	110	110	125	125	105
Neath Port Talbot	55	55	65	55	50	55	65
Bridgend	60	60	65	65	65	55	85
Vale of Glamorgan	80	45	70	65	45	40	50
Rhondda Cynon Taf	90	105	110	125	95	85	90
Merthyr Tydfil	20	20	25	25	20	15	20
Caerphilly	70	85	60	80	90	60	70
Blaenau Gwent	15	15	25	25	20	10	15
Torfaen	60	35	35	35	30	35	35
Monmouthshire	60	55	60	50	45	50	45
Newport	55	50	65	55	60	60	55
Cardiff	135	130	230	155	150	165	165
All (b)	1,330	1,290	1,485	1,420	1,225	1,270	1,330
Response rate	88per cent	84per cent	87per cent	84per cent	81per cent	78per cent	78per cent

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency Destination of Leavers from Higher Education 2002-03 on, First Destination Supplement 1998-99 to 2001-02. The figures above represent Welsh ITT qualifiers from all institutions across the UK. The figures below show the equivalent information for ITT qualifiers from Welsh institutions.

All students completing ITT at Welsh HEIs

	1,445	1,410	1,620	1,505	1,230	1,260	1,315
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Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency Destination of Leavers from Higher Education 2002-03 on, First Destination Supplement 1998-99 to 2001-02.

(a) Numbers are rounded to the nearest five. Due to rounding rows may not add to the total shown.

(b) Includes Welsh domiciles where local education authority is unknown.

Lisa Francis: Would the Minister make a statement on the number of newly-qualified teachers who have moved out of Wales to teach elsewhere in the UK? (WAQ48152)

Jane Davidson: I refer you to the answer I gave to your WAQ47883.

Janet Ryder: Will the Minister detail how she intends to distribute the £50,000 just announced to aid the ‘most gifted pupils’ in Wales? (WAQ48158)

Jane Davidson: In Wales, we use the term ‘more able and talented’ to describe pupils who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of pupils.

In 2003, guidance entitled ‘A Curriculum of Opportunity—Developing Potential into Performance’ was issued (by the then Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales) to all schools in Wales. Since that time, I have been made aware of an increasing need to have in place further guidance quality standards to help schools and LEAs meet the needs of more able and talented pupils—thereby ensuring they receive appropriate levels of support across schools in Wales.

Working in collaboration with the National Association for Able Children in Education Cymru, I recently launched the official consultation on new guidance entitled ‘Meeting the Challenge—Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils’.

In order to ensure that these quality standards are embedded effectively in Wales I have made an additional package of funding available to NACE totalling £47,500. This is in three parts as follows:

£20,000 to give all LEAs and schools in Wales unlimited access to the self-evaluation framework and other materials within the NACE website, which would ordinarily have to be purchased by individual schools;

£22, 500 to meet 50 per cent of the cost of 30 schools to participate in the NACE challenge award scheme which, following a successful assessment, would see them attain the award. The £22,500 would be spread over three years (beginning 2006-07) and enable 10 schools per annum to participate in the award scheme; and

£5,000 for the recruitment and training of 22 training assessors (one for each authority in Wales) to assess progress of schools in implementing the quality standards and assess their progress if participating in the awards scheme. It is envisaged that this would include the recruitment of an appropriate number of Welsh-speaking assessors.

Ann Jones: Has the Minister made an assessment of the cost of extending entitlement to free school meals to all full-time pupils in compulsory education in Wales and, if so, what will be the cost? (WAQ48170)

Jane Davidson: No—our prime consideration at present is how to improve the quality and nutritional standards of school meals, and how to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to driving forward these improvements in all our schools. This is because the Welsh Assembly Government recognises the importance of a balanced diet both to school performance and health and this is the reason for our whole school approach to food and nutrition.

School meals, and especially the provision of free school meals to those who are entitled to them, are an important aspect of the Welsh Assembly Government’s anti-poverty strategy. In deprived areas where the majority of meals served are free, these set the quality for the whole service. However there are still a significant number of children not taking up their free school meal entitlement:

The report ‘Appetite for Life’ recognises that as part of our whole-school approach it is vital that not only do we improve the quality and nutritional value of the food on offer but that we work with our children and young people to ensure that they actually consume the healthier options on offer. The consultation period for this report ends on 31 October.

Ann Jones: What steps is the Minister taking to increase pastoral and other support for young carers at school? (WAQ48171)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government's guidance document 'Inclusion and Pupil Support' (which issued for consultation in April 2005 and which is due to issue as final guidance next month), includes advice and guidance for schools and LEAs on the provision of appropriate support for young carers at school.

It is estimated that there are more than 3,000 young carers of school age in Wales and, in some cases, the responsibilities they have often affect their education and social life.

I am very aware that for some young carers, school may be the only place where they can share their difficulties and that is why the guidance stresses the need for schools to work in close collaboration with local authorities and voluntary agencies to ensure that they are fully aware of the range of help available to them.

That is also why, in June 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government produced a training resource for schools—'Caring for Young Carers'—to help schools identify, approach and help young carers. Specifically, 'Caring for Young Carers' aims to:

raise awareness of what a young carer is and the warning signs that may help to identify them;

highlight the effects a caring role has on the young person;

demonstrate how their caring responsibilities may affect them in school; and

provide guidance on how schools and professionals can help support them.

We have also recently offered a grant of up to £13,000 to Children in Wales to undertake an evaluation of this resource. We have also agreed in principle to underwrite the cost of a pilot young carers' project with schools in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area.

Ann Jones: How many pupils sat A-levels in mathematics or sciences in the 2005-06 academic year? (WAQ48172)

Jane Davidson: The number of Advanced level entries for mathematics and science for 2005-06 is given in table 1 below. Data relate to full-time pupils at a maintained secondary school, special school, pupil referral unit or independent school in Wales and are provisional. Final data will be published in 'GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales, 2005-06' in November 2006.

Table 1: Entries for Advanced level mathematics and science 2005-06

	Candidates of any age	Pupils aged 17 only (a)
Mathematics (b)	1,761	1,603
Science (c)	5,595	5,135
All subjects	28,811	27,079

a) Ages at 31 August 2005 prior to the start of the academic year. 17-year-old pupil cohort 2006: 12,506;

b) Entries in mathematics, mathematics (pure), statistics and mathematics (further);

c) Entries in biology, biology (human), chemistry, physics, science (electronics), science (environmental), science (geology), psychology (as a science).

Ann Jones: What percentage of A-level students in Wales achieving A to C grades did so in science-based subjects in each of the last 10 years? (WAQ48173)

Jane Davidson: The percentage of Advanced level entries achieving grades A to C which were in science subjects for years 1996 to 2006 is given in table 1 below. The data relates to full-time candidates of any age at a maintained secondary school, special school, pupil referral unit or independent school in Wales and is provisional for 2005-06. Final data for 2005-06 will be published in November 2006.

Table 1: Percentage of Advanced level entries achieving grades A to C which were in science subjects 1996-2006

Year	Percentages of entries achieving grade A to C which were in science (a)
1997	22.8
1998	22.9
1999	22.0
2000	22.0
2001	21.4
2002	20.3
2003	19.3
2004	18.8
2005	19.0
2006 (p)	17.8

a) Entries in biology, biology (human), chemistry, physics, science (electronics), science (environmental), science (geology), science (single award), psychology (as a science).

Ann Jones: What percentage of 16 to 18-year-old students in Wales are pursuing science-based qualifications? (WAQ48174)

Jane Davidson: The table below shows the percentage of 16 to 18-year-old students in school sixth forms, further education institutions and higher education institutions that are studying science-based subjects.

Due to the different data sources involved some of the subject types included for each sector may differ slightly.

16 to 18-year-old students pursuing science-based qualifications:

	Number of students	Students studying science as a percentage of all students
School sixth forms, Sept 2005 (a)	9,550	33.2 per cent
Further education institutions, 2004-05 (b)	3,450	7.9 per cent
Higher education institutions, 2004-05 (c)	2,255	16.1 per cent

a) Source: Post-16 pupil level annual schools census, September 2005 census. Science-based courses have been defined as biology, chemistry, physics or science subjects. Excludes independent schools and may include a small number of pupils aged over 18.

b) Source: Lifelong learning Wales record. Includes work-based learning subsidiaries of further education institutions. Learndirect codes have been used to define 'science' qualifications.

c) Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency student record. Joint academic coding system codes have been used to define 'science' qualifications as biological sciences and physical sciences.

Ann Jones: What guidance does the Minister's department give to local education authorities in respect of the installation of fire sprinklers in a) new schools, b) extensions to schools and c) existing school premises? (WAQ48181)

Jane Davidson: Building regulations apply in England and Wales and exist to ensure the health and safety of people in and around buildings. They are not devolved to Wales.

Part B of the regulations refers to fire safety and applies to all new school buildings, major refurbishments and extensions. The provisions within the building regulations cover various aspects of fire safety, for example: to ensure satisfactory standard of means of escape for persons in the event of fire in a building; that fire spread over the internal linings of buildings is inhibited; to ensure the stability of buildings in the event of fire and to ensure there is sufficient degree of fire separation within buildings; and to inhibit the unseen spread of fire and smoke in concealed spaces in buildings.

It is the responsibility of individual local authorities to consider the installation of sprinkler systems alongside all other fire safety issues in consultation with their local fire officers.

A community fire safety committee has been established to advise the Assembly Government on issues relating to fire safety. The committee is currently considering a draft arson strategy for Wales, which includes recommendations on sprinklers in schools, as evidence shows that the majority of school fires are arson related. Once endorsed by the committee the strategy will be presented to the Assembly Government for endorsement, and will form the basis for tackling the problem of arson in Wales in the future.

Ann Jones: Is there a Welsh equivalent to the Department for Education and Skills publication Building Bulletin 100 (BB100) 'Designing and Managing against the Risk of Fire in Schools'? (WAQ48182)

Jane Davidson: New school buildings are subject to the building regulations approved documents. Building regulations apply to England and Wales and are not devolved to Wales.

Fire precautions in new build schools are set in building regulations approved document part B, fire safety. This document is currently under review and is expected to be issued in April 2007. The current draft includes a note regarding the provision of fire precautions in schools and refers to the Building Bulletin 100 (BB100) produced by the Department of Education and Skills. This document has been consulted upon and is in the process of review. It is also due for issue in England and Wales in April 2007. It states that if BB100 is used for fire engineering design, it is deemed to satisfy the Building regulations. BB100 contains reference to the installation of sprinklers in new build schools as a fire engineering solution but does not make them mandatory. It suggests sprinklers as a solution where identified by a risk assessment.

It remains the responsibility of individual local authorities to consider the installation of sprinkler systems alongside all other fire safety issues in consultation with their local fire officers.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on action taken to improve basic skills levels in Wales? (WAQ48206)

Jane Davidson: Our strategy for basic literacy and numeracy skills, 'Words Talk, Numbers Count', sets out a comprehensive and unique, all-age, approach to tackling this serious issue. It is already delivering good results and we have recently commissioned a major and ongoing evaluation of the strategy to assess its long-term impact. The basic skills quality mark has been gained by 93 per cent of our primary schools, 91 per cent of our secondary schools and nearly 80 per cent of post-16 providers, figures that are far ahead of England. One hundred and ninety three employers have signed our unique employer pledge and over 9,000 parents and 10,000 children took part in language and play programmes last year.

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff County Council regarding its Welsh-language education scheme? (WAQ48207) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport.*

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): None. Under current arrangements it is the responsibility of the Welsh Language Board to oversee the preparation, implementation and monitoring of Welsh language schemes drawn up under the Welsh Language Act of 1993. This includes Welsh language education schemes. In the case of a dispute between a public body and the Welsh language board in relation to a Welsh language scheme, I have an adjudicatory function. It would therefore be inappropriate for me—under current circumstances—to have direct discussions with a public body on its scheme. To do so would compromise my adjudicatory role.

John Griffiths: What action is the Minister taking to encourage young people from deprived communities to continue their education post-16? (WAQ48208)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to transforming 14-19 provision in Wales. The 14-19 learning pathways will transform all young people's opportunities. This will be done by extending choice and flexibility; securing individually tailored learning pathways that meet learners' needs; and providing richer opportunities for and experiences which will help learners develop the skills they need for life and work.

What we want to achieve through the 14-19 learning pathways is for every 14 to 19-year-old to have an individual learning pathway with the option which best suits their interests, abilities and learning styles.

This will in turn:

reduce the number of young people leaving full-time education with no qualifications;

increase attendance, reduce exclusion and improve retention;

provide positive focus on achievement where young people's success is celebrated.

14-19 learning pathways will apply to all learners over the next few years. The learning coach and personal support elements of the learning pathways framework will be particularly beneficial in assisting young people from disadvantaged communities to achieve their potential.

The education maintenance allowance Wales scheme was introduced for 16-year-olds for the first time in 2004-05. In 2005-06, the scheme was extended to include 16 and 17-year-olds attending schools or colleges in Wales. The scheme provides an incentive for young people from lower-income families to continue and remain in full-time education. The principal component of the EMA is a weekly award paid direct to the young person's bank account. The award is dependent on satisfactory attendance. Those eligible can qualify for awards of £10, £20 or £30 depending on household income. They can also qualify for periodic additional bonuses of £100 if agreed learning objectives are met. The scheme will be extended to include 16 to 18-year-olds next year.

As at the end of February, 27,660 applications for EMA had been received for 2005-06. Of these, 24,720 had been approved.

Laura Anne Jones: How is the Minister working with the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport regarding the delivery of the UK coaching certificate in higher education colleges? (WAQ48209)

Jane Davidson: Higher education institutions in Wales offer a number of higher education qualifications in sport and coaching but the UK coaching certificate is not a higher education qualification. It is a UK wide, quality assured, 5 level coaching certificate that is transferable across sports and across the UK and which can be delivered by FE colleges or work-based training providers such as sports governing bodies. I met Alun Pugh earlier this month to discuss our joint interest in this initiative, including considering the importance of volunteer training in coaching and instructing, our engagement with SkillsActive, the sector skills council, and how schools can help develop leadership and coaching through their provision. We shall be writing out to the relevant voluntary sector body, the Welsh Sports Association, with further details in due course.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on support for gifted students (WAQ48210)

Jane Davidson: In Wales we use the term 'more able and talented' to describe pupils who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of pupils.

In 2003, guidance entitled 'A Curriculum of Opportunity—Developing Potential into Performance' was issued (by the then ACCAC) to all schools in Wales. Since that time, I have been made aware of an increasing need to have in place further guidance quality standards to help schools and LEAs meet the needs of more able and talented pupils—thereby ensuring they receive appropriate levels of support across schools in Wales.

Working in collaboration with the National Association for Able Children in Education Cymru, I recently launched the official consultation on new guidance entitled 'Meeting the Challenge—Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils'.

In order to ensure that these quality standards are embedded effectively in Wales I have made an additional package of funding available to NACE totalling £47,500. This is in three parts as follows:

£20,000 to give all LEAs and schools in Wales unlimited access to the self-evaluation framework and other materials within the NACE website which would ordinarily have to be purchased by individual schools;

£22,500 to meet 50 per cent of the cost of 30 schools to participate in the NACE challenge award scheme which, following a successful assessment, would see them attain the award. The £22,500 would be spread over three years (beginning 2006-07) and enable 10 schools per annum to participate in the award scheme; and

£5,000 for the recruitment and training of 22 training assessors (one for each authority in Wales) to assess progress of schools in implementing the quality standards and assess their progress if participating in the awards scheme. It is envisaged that this would include the recruitment of an appropriate number of Welsh-speaking assessors.

Laura Anne Jones: Would the Minister make a statement on how she is ensuring safer recruitment in schools in Wales? (WAQ48211)

Jane Davidson: Welsh Assembly Government guidance circular 34/2002 details the pre-appointment checks that should be made on people whose work brings them into contact with children. In January this year, I wrote to all headteachers, governors, and local authority chief officers and cabinet members for education in Wales, re-emphasising my expectation that the most robust procedures should be applied to prevent unsuitable individuals entering the workforce.

Since then, I have brought forward legislation to enable the General Teaching Council for Wales to determine an individual's suitability for registration as a teacher and will be bringing forward further legislation in this session to introduce mandatory checks on school staff.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the education of children with mental health problems? (WAQ48212)

Jane Davidson: Current Welsh Assembly Government guidance on this issue is provided in Welsh Office Circular's 57/94—'The Education of Sick Children', and 34/97—'Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs'. We recognise that both these circulars now need updating and new guidance is currently being drafted to replace them.

The aim of the new guidance will be to primarily provide advice to schools and local education authorities on meeting the educational needs of pupils with medical needs. It will emphasise the need for continuity in education and the impact medical conditions can have on a pupil's education, health and social wellbeing. It will further provide practical advice on school and LEA policies in this regard whether or not a pupil is able to continue in their local school or requires education otherwise than at school and alternative forms of educational provision through home or hospital tuition or in a pupil referral unit. It will also provide important guidance on the administration of medication, the requirement of healthcare plans and the successful re-integration, wherever possible, of pupils into full time

education.

Alongside this guidance we are also currently developing guidance for schools and LEAs on promoting emotional health in education settings which will set out key principles and good practice for promoting emotional health in schools for all pupils and give advice on methods of referral and support for pupils with mental problems. Additionally, we are also in the process of developing a national strategy for developing school-based counselling, a draft of which should be available around the end of the year.

Ann Jones: What plans does the Welsh Assembly Government have to support teachers in improving school discipline? (WAQ48213)

Jane Davidson: We have excellent teachers in Wales, who are dedicated to the vital task of engaging our young people in learning. However, this task is made more challenging by the small minority of pupils who regularly disrupt lessons—as identified by the chief inspector in her annual report.

I am committed to supporting our teachers in the promotion of discipline and order in school, which is why I am taking the opportunity to clarify the overall basis of the authority to discipline pupils offered in the Education and Inspections Bill 2006.

We already have guidance in Wales on a number of key elements covered in the Bill including:

the development of school behaviour policies;

the use of detention;

the application of exclusions; and

the use of reasonable force to restrain pupils.

However, issues such as the confiscation of items and the definition of disciplinary penalties are also covered, which will need to be reflected in new guidance for schools and LEAs in Wales.

We have also sought framework powers within the Education and Inspections Bill to allow us to develop our own legislative approach in Wales to these wider issues of school attendance, behaviour and discipline—including parental responsibilities for excluded pupils and the provision of education for excluded pupils.

The application of these framework powers must be based on clear evidence and developed through close consultation. This is why I have commissioned a major review of behaviour and attendance in Wales.

This review will look at current good practice in Wales, but also the areas where we need to improve to ensure that some of our most vulnerable young people can access the support they need to overcome the barriers to learning that they face.

The first stage of this process was a consultation event held on 26 June 2006, which was used to initiate a debate with key stakeholders around the issues of attendance and behaviour in Wales. Representatives were invited to present and discuss their views on attendance and behaviour, to share good practice they have encountered and identify areas where they believe a real difference could be made. A number of themes and general principles have emerged from the consultation event, which have been used to focus the remit of the review.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline her considerations on the value of course work in determining GCSE qualification grade? (WAQ48214)

Jane Davidson: The extent to which coursework contributes to an overall GCSE grade varies between subjects. The schemes of assessment outlined in the GCSE subject criteria comprise a terminal examination and internal assessment (coursework). The weightings allocated to coursework range from 0 per cent to 60 per cent in certain practical subjects e.g. art and design and technology. Each scheme is designed to provide appropriate opportunities for candidates to apply their subject knowledge, skills and understanding in ways appropriate to that subject. This will continue to be the case with the new GCSE criteria.

The activities associated with coursework within GCSE can offer valuable opportunities and contexts for young people's learning in their chosen subjects. Thus coursework can provide opportunities to develop practical and performance skills. It can also promote activities such as fieldwork and investigatory work in geography and history, which develop both subject-specific and generic skills.

However, the assessment of pupils' coursework must be fair and robust. It is really important that people respect and reward the hard work undertaken by pupils. The current proposed changes to coursework are designed to address the many concerns that have been raised about ensuring that the work assessed really is the pupils' own and not the result, even in part, of inappropriate levels of help or even plagiarism via the internet or elsewhere.

We shall ensure that the subject specific skills and understanding that candidates gain are assessed in a fair, rigorous and reliable way. Generic skills, however, may not necessarily form part of the assessment of each subject. Indeed, assessment of generic skills within many subjects would risk duplication and an unnecessary assessment burden.

By contrast, the key skills qualifications provide an appropriate means of accrediting these skills. While there is already growing provision for key skills in pre-16 provision, the anticipated introduction of the Welsh baccalaureate at key stage 4 and the implementation of the wider 14-19 agenda will provide further opportunities for young people to develop key skills and have them assessed, complementing subject-specific assessment within their GCSE subjects.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the measures she has implemented to ensure schools are safe places of learning? (WAQ48215)

Jane Davidson: We have a responsibility to our children to work together in a concerted way to make their school experience a positive one and establish a safe emotional and physical environment in our schools.

In January this year, I wrote to all schools and local education authorities about the need for employers to implement our guidance and re-emphasised my expectation that pre-appointment checks should be undertaken on all staff whose work brings them into contact with children. Since then, I have brought forward legislation to enable the General Teaching Council for Wales to determine an individual's suitability for registration as a teacher and I will be bringing forward further legislation in this session to introduce mandatory checks on school staff.

I firmly believe that positive behaviour, attendance and discipline are essential foundations for a creative and effective learning and teaching environment in which all members of the school community can thrive and feel respected, safe and secure. This is why I have commissioned a major review of behaviour and attendance in Wales.

This review will look at current good practice in Wales, but also the areas where we need to improve to ensure that some of our most vulnerable young people can access the support they need to overcome the barriers to learning that they face.

The first stage of this process was a consultation event held on 26 June 2006, which was used to initiate a debate with

key stakeholders around the issues of attendance and behaviour in Wales. Representatives were invited to present and discuss their views on attendance and behaviour, to share good practice they have encountered and identify areas where they believe a real difference could be made. A number of themes and general principles have emerged from the consultation event, which have been used to focus the remit of the review.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government is moving towards achieving the goals set out in Learning Pathways 14-19 years? (WAQ48216)

Jane Davidson: Following the launch of the 14-19 learning pathways guidance II and the accompanying DVD in May this year work has begun to implement the recommendations for taking forward the 14-19 learning pathways action plan. Putting the action plan into practice involves building on the different circumstances in each area and creating an entitlement framework for all 14 to 19-year-olds. It recognises and supports the importance of partnership activities between schools and schools, schools and colleges and, indeed, all partners in the education and training arena. There are some key issues in the 14-19 learning pathways action plan 2006 to 2010 that I would like to highlight:

development of an employers' concordat to encourage and secure employer commitment;

the Welsh baccalaureate will be available to all learners;

we are revising the national curriculum at key stage 4 to align better with learning pathways;

we are working to secure high-quality learning and personal support and impartial advice for all learners, with 240 learning coaches participating in the learning coach accredited programme; and

we have set up a group to secure better synchronised funding arrangements to facilitate learners' access to choice and flexibility.

We have a robust system in place for the delivery of this agenda and we will continue to work in partnership with all sectors at both local and national level to inform the implementation of the action plan.

The ministerial advisory group 14-19 panel is presently being set up. The role of the panel will be to provide policy advice to the Minister and Deputy Minister through the ministerial advisory group. This panel will be chaired by Huw Evans, principal, Llandrillo College.

The 14-19 project steering group, chaired by the Deputy Minister, has met twice this year and the supporting five sub groups have been established and have all met to review the action points they are responsible for taking forward. Their remit specifically is to oversee and ensure implementation of the actions and to report progress to the 14-19 project steering group, to ensure remedial action or appropriate alternative strategies are being enacted and to ensure that 14-19 learning pathways programme is delivered and to report progress to the 14-19 project steering group.

The 14-19 network representatives located in each local authority are continuing to improve the learning opportunities available to our young people in Wales. In the Alyn and Deeside area there are a number of projects being undertaken this financial year including:

i. Development of work-focused activities

employ a 'shared' work-focused opportunities development officer;

develop work simulation projects (e.g. girls into construction);

develop work-focused taster sessions for year 9 pupils;

develop entrepreneurship activities for use in learning settings;

identify and share best practice in work experience across all lead learning settings.

ii. Development of Community Participation Opportunities

A minimum of 50 young people will be involved in experiencing at least one of 10 different community participation activities for at least 10 hours.

Looking ahead to 2007-08 I have already committed increased expenditure for the 14-19 learning pathways, with its budget increasing significantly from £8.5 million in 2006-07 to £32.5 million in 2007-08—this will enable more projects to be undertaken throughout Wales.

Eleanor Burnham: What funding is available for the installation of sprinklers in schools? (WAQ48218)

Jane Davidson: All authorities in Wales receive significant Assembly support for improvements to building and associated facilities in schools.

Local authorities are able to use their annual capital allocations—general capital funding provided through the local government revenue settlement—for any capital purpose including the installation of sprinklers. Authorities also receive an annual formula allocation of school buildings improvement grant from the Assembly, which can only be used for the improvement of school buildings and facilities. This grant can also be used for fire prevention works including the installation of sprinklers.

It is the responsibility of individual local authorities to consider the installation of sprinkler systems alongside all other fire safety issues, in consultation with their local fire officers.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the closure of small schools in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ48219)

Jane Davidson: A total of five small schools have closed or are due to close during 2006 in the Mid and West Wales local education authority areas: two in Ceredigion, and one each in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys.

Three of these schools were closed without any local opposition, so I was not involved in their determination. There was a single objection to a fourth, from an ex-pupil living in England who had not been involved in the consultation or heard the authority's case for closure.

These five closures involved a total of just 47 pupils.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the state of school buildings in Powys? (WAQ48220)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government does not hold information on the condition of individual schools in Wales. Building condition surveys are undertaken by local authorities with the technical information feeding into a local authority's education service asset management plan. It is this information which presently determines which schools require capital investment. It is the authority which determines which projects receive priority and will form the basis of its proposals for use of its school buildings improvement grant, alongside its own capital programme.

Powys Local Education Authority has advised Assembly officials that it has a £60 million backlog of repair and maintenance on existing buildings.

Since 2002-03, the Welsh assembly Government has provided to Powys County Council a total of £14,559,171 million in school buildings improvement grant, including the following projects under the large project £9 million scheme:

Penmaes (special school) new building Phase 2	£4,043,714
Maesydderwyn High School extension and refurbishment	£2,573,000
Crossgates County Primary School extension	£620,000

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister give a progress update on the free school breakfast initiative? (WAQ48221)

Jane Davidson: This initiative was first introduced in September 2004 in the Communities First areas of a number of local authorities. As the initiative has progressed it has been extended into non-Communities First areas, with all local authorities invited to participate from September 2005. All primary schools across Wales will have received an invitation to participate by January 2007. Officials are working closely with local authorities to develop a rolling timetable to bring on all schools that wish to take up this offer.

Based on the most recent information available from LEAs, there were a total of 353 schools confirmed as having started serving breakfast by the end of the summer term 2006. A further 201 schools are scheduled to begin participating during the autumn term 2006. In addition, a further 54 schools have already signed up to participate by the end of spring term 2007, followed by a further two schools in summer 2007, and a further two schools in autumn 2007. This gives a total of 612 primary schools, which accounts for around 38 per cent of the total number of primary schools in Wales.

I am pleased, however, that additional schools are continuing to express a wish to participate as they see the benefits of doing so and anticipate that the participation rate will increase even further.

Trish Law: Will the Minister give a detailed breakdown of all Welsh Assembly Government payments made to Coleg Gwent in the past two years? (WAQ48224)

Jane Davidson: Funding for Coleg Gwent was principally via ELWa in the last two financial years 2004-05 and 2005-06. The Education and Learning Wales funding in 2004-05 was £40.65 million, of which £2.746 million was capital. This rose to £42.36 million in 2005-06, of which £2.373 million was capital.

Ann Jones: What was the cost of (a) repairing and (b) rebuilding school buildings damaged by fire in Wales during

each of the last five years for which figures are available? (WAQ48237)

Jane Davidson: The information you request is not collected centrally.

It remains the responsibility of local authorities to cover the cost of repairing and rebuilding school buildings that have been damaged by fire. All or most of that cost will be covered by an authority's fire insurance policy, which will not simply be for schools but for all local authority buildings.

Authorities can of course use their annual formula allocation of school buildings improvement grant, along with their own annual capital funds, but that remains a decision for individual authorities.

Ann Jones: What estimate has the Minister made of the cost of fitting sprinklers in all new school buildings in Wales? (WAQ48238)

Jane Davidson: New school buildings are subject to the building regulations approved documents.

Part B of the regulations refers to fire safety and applies to all new school buildings, major refurbishments and extensions. There is no mandatory requirement in building regulations to install fire sprinklers.

It remains a matter for individual authorities to undertake the appropriate assessments, liaising with their local fire safety officer, when considering the installation of sprinkler systems in commissioning the design and build specification of a new school.

There has been guidance issued by the Chief Fire Officers Association, 'Guidance on the Provision of Sprinklers in Schools'. The guidance has been written to assist those parties involved in fire safety, loss control and automatic sprinkler provision in educational premises. The guidance encourages local authorities, designers and builders to involve the fire service at an early stage in the design process, in order to keep costs low, in some cases as low as 1 per cent of the construction costs.

Local authorities are able to use their annual capital allocations—general capital funding, provided through the local government revenue settlement—for any capital purpose including the installation of sprinklers. Authorities also receive an annual formula allocation of school buildings improvement grant from the Assembly Government, which can only be used for the improvement of school buildings and facilities. This grant can also be used for fire prevention works including the installation of sprinklers.

Janet Ryder: What are the final figures for the number of Welsh-domiciled students and other EU students in their first and second year who will qualify for the grant offsetting top-up fees? (WAQ48239)

Jane Davidson: The fee remission grant will be introduced in academic year 2007-08, when higher education institutions in Wales will be able to charge variable tuition fees. In 2007-08, eligible students who started their degree in either 2006-07 or 2007-08 will receive the grant of £1,845. We have no information yet on student numbers or grant applications for 2007-08. Available data, for academic year 2004-05, shows that there were:

21,700 Welsh domiciled students in the first or second year of their courses in Welsh HEIs; and

1,700 non-UK EU nationals in the first or second year of their courses in Welsh HEIs.

The final University and Colleges Admissions Service figures on university entrance in the current academic year will

be available in January 2007.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Elin Jones: Will the Minister detail: (i) the number of bovine TB incidents; and (ii) new cases of bovine TB for Wales for each month since December 2005; and will he detail the percentage of these incidents in relation to the GB total? (WAQ47677)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): The most up-to-date information (up to June 2006) has now become available and I am pleased to enclose the statistics that that you requested.

The two parts of your question refer to the same statistical information. Each 'new case' is recorded on a herd basis and is therefore classified as a new TB incident. While interpreting these statistics it should be noted that they are provisional and accurate as of 28 July 2006, when they were downloaded from the State Veterinary Service database. The figures will be subject to change as more data become available.

Number of TB incidents (also refers to the number of new cases)

	Wales	Great Britain	per cent of GB
December 2005	50	281	18
January 2006	93	386	24
February 2006	59	312	19
March 2006	70	363	19
April 2006	52	259	20
May 2006	54	267	20
June 2006	51	182	28

You may be interested to know that a number of statistics are available, including a comprehensive breakdown of Wales-specific data, on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website at the following address: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/tb/stats/index.htm>. These statistics are published one month in arrears in order to gain an accurate a picture as possible of the disease.

Jocelyn Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of officials that are employed in the agriculture department? (WAQ48165)

Carwyn Jones: In 2003, following the change in my portfolio, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department expanded to include environment and planning. At present, 956 officials work in the Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside.

Jocelyn Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of officials that are employed to deal with climate change issues? (WAQ48166)

Carwyn Jones: Three people are currently employed specifically to deal with co-ordination of climate change issues. They draw on expertise from colleagues across the Assembly Government, working on specific topics for example energy policy, transport policy and flood risk management. Assembly Government officials also work closely with a wider network of climate change experts in other organisations in Wales?

Elin Jones: Will the Minister detail what representations the Minister has received from the EC regarding proposed changes to cattle compensation and will he give dates of when they were received? (WAQ48229)

Carwyn Jones: I have received no representations from the EC about the state aid block exemption regulation.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister detail what representations the Minister has sent to the EC regarding proposed changes to cattle compensation and will he give dates of when they were sent? (WAQ48230)

Carwyn Jones: Officials have contributed to a response and other representations made by DEFRA, which represents the member state. In essence, we believed that any changes to the block exemption should be postponed to fall into line with other work being done in Europe on cost and responsibility sharing. Concern was also expressed that the proposals would run counter to early reporting of disease, and about how the proposals would operate in the context of endemic disease. The latest representations were made on 6 October 2006.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister detail what assessment he has made of the implications for Wales, and particularly farmers of Wales, of proposals by the EC for cattle compensation? (WAQ48231)

Carwyn Jones: No assessment has yet been carried out on the proposed changes to the agricultural state aid block exemption regulation.

Questions to the Finance Minister

Lisa Francis: Further to WAQ45957, how much was spent on copyright fees, including fees paid to the makers of Scrabble? (WAQ48149)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): Nothing.

Lisa Francis: Further to WAQ45957, would the Minister provide a full breakdown of this cost and specify how much was spent by each Minister? (WAQ48150)

Sue Essex: The bulk of the ministerial Christmas cards were ordered together and a breakdown of costs per Minister is

not available.

Lisa Francis: Will this year's Welsh Assembly Government Christmas cards be funded by the taxpayer, and, if so, what is the anticipated total cost, including any copyright fees? (WAQ48156)

Sue Essex: The cost of ministerial Christmas cards is met from the Welsh Assembly Government budget. The cost of cards for this Christmas is not yet known.

Lisa Francis: Further to WAQ45957, does the £5,302.20 total include the £2,000 spent on obtaining authorisation for the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport to use a Scrabble game on his Christmas card, and from which budget was the £2,000 paid? (WAQ48157)

Sue Essex: The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport did not incur any expenditure in obtaining authorisation for the issue of his 2005 official Christmas cards.

Mick Bates: What discussions has the Minister held with UK Government Ministers regarding the consultation on the future of Energy Watch, Post Watch and the National Consumer Council? (WAQ48183) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

Sue Essex: Consumer policy is not devolved to the National Assembly, but The Welsh Assembly Government has been in regular correspondence with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the future of consumer advocacy. Assembly Government Ministers have supported the overall policy thrust, but have made it clear that it must be consistent with devolution, and represent the distinctive needs and aspirations of consumers in Wales.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister outline her main priorities for the next 12 months? (WAQ48192)

Sue Essex: The priorities set out below are those on which I will be principally focusing until the National Assembly elections take place next year.

Improving public services remains a top priority for the Assembly Government. We have recently welcomed the Beecham report as a landmark document and have accepted its thrust. The Assembly Government intends to publish a full response later in the autumn which will set out the actions we will be taking in the next phase of our public service reforms.

Delivering the final budget later in the year, and so completing the work we began in budget planning round 2004 to re-align the Government's spending priorities in order to deliver the commitments we set out in 'Wales: A Better Country', will be a key concern. As part of the budget process I will publish the local government finance report, giving details of the settlement for unitary authorities for 2007-08, and a separate report giving details of the police revenue support grant for 2007-08. Subject to the outcome of consultation I propose to introduce a new small business rate relief scheme from 1 April 2007.

The location strategy programme also remains one of my priorities. The new offices in Merthyr, Llandudno and Aberystwyth will support the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Making the Connections' agenda by bringing the Assembly Government closer to the people of Wales and creating improved customer accessibility and communications, and by securing more sustainable operations, improved and innovative working environments, and new career opportunities for Assembly Government staff across Wales. The offices should also serve to stimulate local economic growth and regeneration. The first of these offices opens this month in Merthyr.

In addition to these matters, I shall continue work on the development of the spatial plan, and oversee any changes to financial and budgetary processes required in the light of the relevant provisions in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

John Griffiths: What measures has the Minister taken to support Newport East in improving the local services it delivers since 2003 (WAQ48193)

Sue Essex: It is difficult to assess the impact of the Welsh Assembly Government's policies on the achievements of local government in areas such as Assembly constituencies that are not consistent with local authority boundaries. The great majority of the Newport East constituency is served by Newport City Council.

I concluded a policy agreement with Newport City Council in September 2004, and this agreement sets out the improvements the council has agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver by 2007. The council's performance in 2005-06 was very strong, and we have already paid it its performance incentive grant for 2006-07 of £1,475,102.

The council has made notable improvements in the following areas:

Newport has met the targets for improving secondary school attendance (90.06 per cent) and reducing the numbers of children leaving school without a qualification (1.61 per cent).

Children in local authority care: Newport has performed very well with these measures and is one of the few local authorities that has achieved its milestones for improvement for all three:

looked-after children with care plans: Newport achieved 98.7 per cent, this being the fifth best performance in Wales;

looked-after children with plans for permanence: Newport exceeded its milestone of 75 per cent with a strong performance of 92.86 per cent;

looked-after children experiencing changes of school: Newport was fourth best in Wales, with a performance of 7.4 per cent.

Newport has made good progress with reducing the rate of delayed transfers of care, starting from a baseline of 34 and achieving 12.12 per 1,000 population aged 75 or over.

The numbers of older people helped to live at home has increased from 94 to 140.70 per 1,000 population aged 65 or over, which is the third best performance in Wales.

Newport has improved energy efficiency in its council buildings by achieving a 13.07 per cent reduction in energy use and has achieved a 5.30 per cent reduction in energy use in their housing stock.

Newport recycled 27.12 per cent of domestic waste in 2005-06, significantly exceeding their milestone of 21 per cent.

Newport has also significantly exceeded their milestone for business start-ups achieving 86 (milestone 80) and 16 (milestone 15) for ethnic minority business start-ups.

John Griffiths: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to promote public service improvements in local authorities in Wales? (WAQ48194)

Sue Essex: The Welsh Assembly Government, working with other national bodies, is involved in a range of activity to promote public service improvements in Welsh local authorities.

The revised Wales programme for improvement has put in place a policy framework for local government that is flexible enough to take account of local priorities, yet robust enough to allow national comparison that will drive up public service improvements. This is accomplished by enabling local government to discharge its duties to secure continuous improvement in the services that it provides in a way that is integrated with their corporate and business planning cycles.

Furthermore, I will be providing almost £4.5 million to directly support improvement within local government during the 2006-07 financial year. This money will be used to fund capacity building within local authorities and national improvement studies conducted by the Wales Audit Office. This includes funding of £300,000 in 2006-07 for the Excellence Wales scheme. This will identify and share the wealth of good practice within local government in Wales by highlighting what is innovative and what works well in delivering the key public services that our communities depend upon.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government is supporting town and community councils in Wales? (WAQ48195)

Sue Essex: Welsh Assembly Government policy aims to develop the capacity and enhance the role of community and town councils as locally elected statutory bodies. Measures being implemented include sponsorship of One Voice Wales as the single representative body for such councils in Wales; addressing the training and development needs of members and officers through the recently published National Training Strategy and the publication of good practice and other guidance; and encouraging collaborative working and effective partnerships with principal councils through the development of good practice guidance and a model charter agreement.

Owen John Thomas: How many local authorities have been awarded with a sum of money from the £31 million fund set up by the Welsh Assembly Government to reward councils that meet the shared policy objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Partnership Council for Wales? (WAQ48196)

Sue Essex: In 2004-05 every local authority in Wales received its share of the £30 million performance incentive grant for finalising their policy agreements with the Welsh Assembly Government. The agreement contains 16 performance measures, based around five key policy themes with annual milestones up to and including 2006-07. The performance incentive grant is distributed as per the standard spending assessment.

In 2005-06 every local authority received its share of the £31 million performance incentive grant for completing satisfactory performance against their policy agreement measures, using their 2004-05 performance data.

My officials are currently negotiating with local authorities while analysing their 2005-06 performance data. To date, four authorities have received their 2006-07 performance incentive grant while several others are close to demonstrating satisfactory performance and receiving their performance incentive grant.

All payments of the performance incentive grant are dependent on a local authority completing satisfactory levels of performance, as per a policy agreement protocol, for all sixteen policy agreement measures.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of local government services in South Wales East? (WAQ48197)

Sue Essex: It is hard to generalise about a wide range of services being provided by six different local authorities. The standard of services in those areas is, however, broadly good and improving. For instance, I am particularly pleased to note that Newport City Council achieved nearly all of its stretching policy agreement targets in 2005-06, and was among the first authorities in Wales to receive its performance incentive grant. It is also gratifying to witness the successful and rapid turnaround in the performance of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council following its well-documented problems a few years ago.

I am also very pleased with the level of commitment that local authorities in south-east Wales have shown to collaboration and joint working, whether through the spatial plan, the Welsh Local Government Association regional co-ordinating committee, the Heads of the Valleys initiative, and otherwise. Further developments in this area will be essential to maintaining a standard of services that meets public need.

Owen John Thomas: What recent discussions has the Minister had with the leader of Cardiff County Council regarding the council's budget allocation? (WAQ48198)

Sue Essex: During the summer recess the Deputy Minister for Local Government and myself have between us visited all local authorities in Wales to hear at first hand the issues that concern them. The Deputy Minister visited Cardiff County Council on 8 August. In addition, the First Minister met the leader of Cardiff as recently as 12 October.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on her priorities for the local government settlement for the coming year? (WAQ48199)

Sue Essex: I refer you to the draft budget I published on 17 October. Publication of the provisional settlement on 25 October will provide details of the support being provided to local government for 2007-08.

Peter Black: How does the Minister intend to take the Beecham review forward? (WAQ48200)

Sue Essex: We welcomed the Beecham review as a landmark document and have accepted its thrust. We will set out the action we intend to take in the next phase of our public service reform in our response to the review, due to be published later in the autumn.

Ann Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with the UK Government regarding the funding of equal pay

liabilities by local authorities? (WAQ48201)

Sue Essex: I have had discussions with the UK Government, as the issue of equal pay is something that affects local authorities in England and Scotland as well. It is important that we have a common understanding of the issue. Through these discussions I have lobbied HM Treasury to remove the restrictions to the capitalisation rules so as to allow local authorities in Wales the ability to capitalise the costs of back pay, should they decide it is sensible to do so. However, ultimately, it is for local authorities to put in place the necessary arrangements to deal with the costs arising from single status agreements.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on liaison between the National Assembly for Wales and Wrexham council? (WAQ48202)

Sue Essex: Wrexham council is not a matter for me. You may need to address your query to the Presiding Officer.

Eleanor Burnham: What plans does the Minister have for encouraging further co-operation between local authorities? (WAQ48203)

Sue Essex: We are already supporting a number of major initiatives that encourage greater collaboration across Wales, not just between local authorities but also between local authorities and their partners. These include the 'Making the Connections' improvement fund, Wales spatial plan programme and the WLGA regional partnership boards.

I intend to publish a local government policy statement in the spring of 2007. This will set out in detail how local government should discharge its key role in delivering the Beecham vision, and how we will support it in doing so over the next three to four years. An extensive consultation programme started earlier this month with local government and other partners to shape this policy statement. It will look to address the need to:

improve the delivery of public services regardless of who delivers them;

the need for the Assembly Government, local government and other partners work together effectively on the strategic long-term development of the key sub-regional areas across Wales;

ensure that community strategy partnerships really do become the partnership of partnerships at a local authority level and are effective in delivering the agreed objectives for their area.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on the proposal to introduce a new all-Wales small business rate relief scheme? (WAQ48204)

Sue Essex: I am consulting on a proposal to replace the rural rate relief scheme with a small business rate relief scheme for the whole of Wales. This will provide rate relief of 50 per cent for businesses with a rateable value under £2,000, and 25 per cent for businesses with a rateable value between £2,000 and £4,999.

In addition there will be enhanced rate relief for post offices in all parts of Wales. Post offices with a rateable value under £9,000 will receive 100 per cent relief, and those with a rateable value between £9,000 and £11,999 will receive 50 per cent relief.

The relief will be applied automatically to rate bills, and funded entirely funded by the Assembly Government and will be effective from 1 April 2007

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Lisa Francis: Would the Minister provide a breakdown of the total budget for Health Challenge Wales? (WAQ48151)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Brian Gibbons): In 2004-05, the Welsh Assembly Government spent £695,000 on marketing and publicity for Health Challenge Wales. The breakdown of expenditure was

Advertising	£436,000
Research and Evaluation	£35,000
Merchandising and local events	£224,000

In 2005-06, the budget for marketing Health Challenge Wales was £480,000. The breakdown of expenditure was

Advertising	£250,000
Printed information and banners	£52,500
Merchandising	£77,000
Support for national and local events	£89,500
Call centre services	£11,000

In 2006-07, the budget is again £480,000. I anticipate the breakdown of estimated expenditure in the current year to be

Sponsorships	£210,000
Printed information and banners	£117,000
Merchandising	£80,000
Support for national and local events	£62,000
Call centre services	£11,000

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on efficiency savings expected by Powys County Council on its budget for 2007-08? (WAQ48153) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

Sue Essex: Powys County Council, like all local authorities, have agreed annual efficiency savings targets. It will be a

matter for the authority to set its budget and associated efficiency savings for 2007-08. To assist them in doing that, I will announce details of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2007-08 later this month.

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the budget for Powys County Council for 2007-08? (WAQ48154) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

Sue Essex: Local authorities are responsible for setting their own budgets. I will announce details of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2007-08 later this month following the publication of the draft Assembly budget.

Lisa Francis: How much has Health Challenge Wales spent on advertising in each of the last three financial years? (WAQ48155)

Brian Gibbons: In 2004-05, the cost of the first public awareness campaign to promote Health Challenge Wales was £436,000 excluding value added tax. This campaign included a full mix of advertising on television, radio, media and outdoor posters.

In 2005-06, two smaller public awareness campaigns were run, using television and radio advertising only. The total cost of these campaigns was £250,000 excluding VAT.

No advertising has been commissioned in 2006-07.

Helen Mary Jones: What has been the impact across Wales on the delivery of pre-registration nurse education programmes in universities and in clinical placements of the removal of Fitness to Practice lecturer practitioners on 31 July 2006, when funding for these posts ended? (WAQ48167)

Brian Gibbons: As part of the Fitness for Practice initiative, the role of lecturer practitioner/practice educator commenced in Wales in 2002. A detailed evaluation of the Fitness for Practice initiative is due for completion in December 2006. The role of lecturer practitioner/practice educator has not been removed throughout Wales. There are currently 33 individuals in post. A further eight appointments will be advertised for north Wales in the near future.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail grants made available for advocacy services as part of the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act 2005? (WAQ48168)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government has issued a grant of £9,000 to each local health board, local authority and NHS trust in Wales to facilitate training in the implications of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. A number of these organisations submitted pooled bids in order to optimise the use of the grant funding available. I support this as an excellent example of collaborative working.

£612,000 was allocated in 2006-07, and from April 2007 a total of £1.123 million will be included in the local authority and local health board allocations to fund the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act. This will include funding for advocacy services.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the vacancy levels of nurses in the NHS in Wales, and will he detail the number of recruits for each trust for each quarter since 1999? (WAQ48169)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the vacancy levels of nurses and the number of staff in post in the NHS in Wales can be found on the following StatsWales site:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>.

Information on the number of staff leaving and joining throughout the year is not centrally held.

Ann Jones: How is the BCG vaccination currently administered to children in Wales and what plans exist to change this regime? (WAQ48177)

Ann Jones: How does the Minister plan to prevent the spread of new drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis among people in Wales? (WAQ48176)

Ann Jones: How many people in Wales have been diagnosed with tuberculosis in each of the last four years, broken down by local health board? (WAQ48175)

Brian Gibbons: The epidemiology of TB in Wales and the UK has changed—from a disease of the general population in the early 1950s—to one of predominantly high-risk groups. To reflect this, health professionals in Wales received guidance on BCG immunisation from the Welsh Assembly Government in two Welsh health circulars, which were issued in 2005 (WHC 2005 062 and WHC 2005 077). These circulars provided details to all health professionals in Wales regarding the Assembly's plans to implement a targeted TB immunisation programme. This programme is based on recommendations by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, an independent expert group that advises government in all four UK countries. There are no plans to change the advice contained in the two Welsh health circulars as this advice is based on the best clinical evidence regarding the prevention of TB in the UK.

NHS trusts and the National Public Health Service are working with LHBs across Wales to ensure that the targeted BCG programme is implemented as effectively as possible. Those risk groups that are currently targeted under the new programme are:

a) neonates with a parent or grandparent born in a country with TB incidence of 40/100,000

b) children older than 12 months:

who were born in a country outside the UK where TB incidence is 40/100,000 or greater;

who have a parent or grandparent who was born in a country where TB incidence is 40/100,000 or greater;

who are contacts of a TB case, or are to visit or live in a country for a period of one month or more where TB incidence is 40/100,000 or greater.

Previously unvaccinated older children with specific risk factors for TB who would formerly have been offered BCG through the schools programme, will be identified at suitable opportunities, and tested and vaccinated if appropriate. The contact, occupational and travel-related recommendations remain unchanged. The advice issued in 2005 has brought the Welsh Assembly Government TB policy into line with current World Health Organization guidelines.

The NPHS is working closely with other parts of the NHS to promote a consistent approach to the management of tuberculosis, in accordance with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's guidelines for the prevention and control of tuberculosis, published this year. This includes the use of effective infection control measures to prevent the spread of tuberculosis in healthcare settings, especially hospitals. NHS staff are encouraged, and made aware of the need, to assess patients with TB to ascertain if they could have a drug-resistant strain of the infection. Arrangements can then be made for the patient to have the appropriate range of drugs to ensure effective treatment, and measures put in place to prevent the spread of the infection. At present, the numbers of multi-drug resistant strains in Wales are small. Regardless, the infection control management of all strains is similar, albeit with heightened isolation requirements if a person with such a strain has to be admitted to hospital

Local authority/ Local health board	Yearly TB notifications					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 *
Anglesey unitary authority	5	3	2	9	5	5
Blaenau Gwent unitary authority	1	0	0	0	1	1
Bridgend unitary authority	3	8	4	2	1	1
Caerphilly unitary authority	2	5	1	0	0	2
Cardiff unitary authority	38	31	35	56	39	40
Carmarthenshire unitary authority	20	18	6	6	16	13
Ceredigion unitary authority	5	3	3	1	7	0
Conwy unitary authority	11	7	6	6	6	5
Denbighshire unitary authority	5	3	0	6	1	2
Flintshire unitary authority	3	0	1	1	7	7
Gwynedd unitary authority	10	8	10	3	7	11
Merthyr Tydfil unitary authority	6	2	3	5	2	2
Monmouthshire unitary authority	3	3	0	2	1	1
Neath and Port Talbot unitary authority	18	7	15	4	11	3
Newport unitary authority	8	7	11	4	11	16
Pembrokeshire unitary authority	12	4	2	2	7	4
Powys unitary authority	10	4	0	3	6	4
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf unitary authority	17	21	16	14	12	16
Swansea unitary authority	4	2	2	0	18	11
Torfaen unitary authority	3	3	0	0	2	0

Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority	9	2	4	5	6	8
Wrexham unitary authority	5	2	4	6	13	11
Wales Total	198	143	125	135	179	163

Office of National Statistics TB notifications by local health board/local authority 2000 to 2005.

2005 provisional figures correct as at 13/10/06.

Yearly total for 2006 not yet available.

Compiled by the communicable disease surveillance centre Wales, National Public Health Service 13/10/06.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the role(s) of the Health Protection Agency and the Wales Centre for Health in the control of communicable diseases in Wales? (WAQ48178)

Brian Gibbons: The National Public Health Service has the lead for control of communicable disease in Wales through its infection and communicable disease service. The infection and communicable disease service provides a national network of microbiology laboratories, a network of health protection units and the communicable disease surveillance centre. These elements contribute to the surveillance of communicable disease and infection in Wales. The infection and communicable disease service also contributes to training in communicable disease control.

The Health Protection Agency provides reference laboratory support to Wales in the control of communicable diseases, as well as leading the surveillance of disease at a UK national level.

The Wales Centre for Health has a role as a training provider and, in respect of communicable disease control, manages the lead officer training programme.

Ann Jones: Which hospitals in Wales have mixed wards, and what is the estimated date by which he expects each of these hospitals to have single-sex wards? (WAQ48179)

Brian Gibbons: Admissions wards, intensive care units, high dependency units and some other areas are and will remain mixed. Where existing hospitals in Wales have mixed wards, these are divided into single sex bays and there are operational policies to ensure patient privacy and dignity. Where new hospitals are being developed the appropriateness of single-sex accommodation will be considered.

Jonathan Morgan: What has been the total cost of delayed transfers of care in Wales since 1999? (WAQ48186)

Brian Gibbons: The real opportunity cost of a delayed transfer is that treatment for someone else is delayed. It is not possible to put a simple number on the cost of a delay. We know that in 2004 (the latest complete figures available) the average cost of providing a bed varied between specialties from £185 per day for geriatric medicine to £1,110 for cardiothoracic surgery. We also need to recognise that a substantial number of people whose transfer is delayed are waiting for alternative services such as NHS continuing care in a new setting, other NHS services or other care in the community. These services have a cost too.

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister provide month-by-month data on how many operations have been cancelled in Bro Morgannwg and Swansea over the past 12 months? (WAQ48191)

Brian Gibbons: The following table is a month-by-month breakdown of cancelled operations at Bro Morgannwg and Swansea NHS trusts. Also included in this table is the number of operations performed at each of these trusts.

	Bro Morgannwg cancelled operations	Bro Morgannwg operations carried out	Swansea cancelled operations	Swansea operations carried out
Aug-05	85	1,083	771	3,164
Sep-05	115	1,152	832	3,224
Oct-05	145	969	694	2,979
Nov-05	166	1,234	701	3,106
Dec-05	89	896	578	2,730
Jan-06	147	1,146	667	2,548
Feb-06	99	1,096	652	2,429
Mar-06	158	1,083	740	2,803
Apr-06	102	974	560	2,488
May-06	94	1,089	641	2,940
Jun-06	166	1,170	809	3,006
Jul-06	84	1,127	707	3,083
Aug-06	122	1,215	722	2,983

These cancelled operation figures include operations that are cancelled both by the patient or by the trust, between the date the operation is booked and the day of the operation. Operations may be cancelled by the trust for operational or clinical reasons.

As part of the 2006-07 service and financial framework, one of the modernisation and efficiency targets is that all NHS trusts are required to reduce those operations cancelled either on the day of the operation or day before the operation as a percentage of all scheduled operations. The target to be achieved is 6 per cent or under for 2006-07.

Jenny Randerson: How does the Minister intend to reduce appointment waiting times, and maximise the number of patients treated by the emergency walk-in service of the department of genitourinary medicine in Cardiff? (WAQ48205)

Brian Gibbons: Operational responsibility for genitourinary medicine services in Cardiff rests with the local health community.

Demand for genitourinary medicine services increased from 15,130 in 2004-05 to 16,520 in 2005-06. In the first six months of 2006-07, 8,046 patients accessed these services. This compares with the contracted value of 13,130.

In March the Royal College of Physicians undertook a review at the request of the local health communities. The final report is expected at any time. It is anticipated that an action plan will follow from the report.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the number of school nurses in Wales according to each local authority area? (WAQ48222)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the number of school nurses in each NHS trust is available on the following StatsWales website:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>.

Information on the number employed in each local authority area is not centrally held.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the number of school nurses in Wales funded from the (i) health budget, and (ii) education budget? (WAQ48223)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the take up levels for number of community psychiatric nurse training places for each year since 2003? (WAQ48225)

Brian Gibbons: The number of community psychiatric nurse training places taken up in Wales in the years since 2003 is as follows:

2003	20
2004	15
2005	14
2006	19

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the number of community psychiatric nurse training places for each year since 2003? (WAQ48226)

Brian Gibbons: The number of community psychiatric nurse training places commissioned in the years since 2003 is as follows:

2003	22
2004	17
2005	18
2006	20

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail any discussions he has held with training providers with regard to a new contract for community psychiatric nurse training? (WAQ48227)

Brian Gibbons: The workforce development education and contracting unit will be discussing with service providers, professional groups and education providers future requirements for community mental health nurse training.

David Lloyd: Will the Minister detail any plan he has to use Assembly moneys to fund those children's hospices that have seen lottery funding withdrawn? (WAQ48232)

David Lloyd: Will the Minister detail Assembly funding provided to Claire House children's hospital, which accepts children from Wales? (WAQ48233)

Brian Gibbons: I recognise and am grateful for the valuable contribution which children's hospices make to the care of children with long-term and life-limiting illness. Commissioning of palliative care services rests with local health boards, which have the statutory responsibility for planning, organising and purchasing palliative care. Hospices which offer care for the children of Wales should engage with LHBs to secure long-term formal commissioning arrangements.

Lisa Francis: How long do in-patients have to wait for an endoscopy from the time of admission and would the Minister break down the figures for each local health board in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ48235)

Brian Gibbons: Statistics in respect of waiting times for endoscopies are being collected on a trail basis only at present. We expect to publish these statistics once the information being collected can be verified as accurate.

However, certain diagnostic and therapy waiting times are published on a monthly basis, and the target to be achieved by 31 March 2007 is that no-one should wait more than thirty-six weeks.

While data is being collected for non-in-patient diagnostic waiting times, in-patient waiting times are not routinely collected as such investigations are undertaken on the basis of individual clinical assessment and urgency.

Lisa Francis: How long do in-patients have to wait for a CT scan from the time of admission, and would the Minister break down the figures for each local health board in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ48236)

Brian Gibbons: The latest statistics, published on 11 October, are available through the StatsWales Website at: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk>. Statistics relating to computerised tomography scans are not published on a local health board basis, but are available from the website on a trust basis. The current waiting time target is that, by 31 March 2007, no one will wait longer than 36 weeks for a CT scan.

While data is being collected for non-in-patient diagnostic waiting times, in-patient waiting times are not routinely collected as such investigating are undertaken on the basis of individual clinical assessment and urgency.

Alun Cairns: How does the Minister reconcile different approaches taken across the UK in the treatment of neuro-muscular diseases? (WAQ48241)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government expects NHS commissioners to work with their public health advisors to draw on evidence-based good practice in helping to inform the shape of service provision and determining contracting arrangements with local services. Commissioners are responsible for facilitating the development of evidence-based services that are responsive to need and proven to be both clinically and cost effective.

Any service developments in Wales will need to be in response to the needs of the people of Wales. Approaches to health and social care services, including the treatment and management of neuro-muscular conditions, will need to be considered as part of wider commissioning and planning arrangements, taking into account the objectives of 'Designed for Life', innovative developments in service delivery and service reconfiguration plans.

Alun Cairns: What action is the Minister taking to develop a neuro-muscular network to improve care for patients suffering from such diseases? (WAQ48242)

Brian Gibbons: The Assembly recognises the important role that regional, commissioning and clinical networks can play in the provision of health services and support. I anticipate that network developments will be a key part of delivering the objectives of 'Designed for Life' and in improving health and social care services.

Networks are normally developed on the basis of patient referral patterns and in many cases they may already be in existence informally. As part of their needs assessment process and planning arrangements, commissioners of services may wish to build upon those informal networks if there is strong evidence that this would strengthen service provision and add overall value to health and social care services.

We issued guidance on the development of networks in 2005 and this will be further supported by new commissioning guidance aimed at strengthening the future development of services whether on an all-Wales, regional, or local basis. Commissioners of services will be expected to assess need, plan and prioritise services, and utilise resources effectively within this commissioning framework.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail changes to the number of district nurses in Gwent for each year since 2003? (WAQ48334)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the number of district nurses employed by Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust for each year from 2003 to 2005 can be found on the StatsWales website:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the all contracts, grants or other public moneys awarded to, under her portfolio, British Gas since 1999, including the purpose and cost of each item of expenditure? (WAQ47901)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): Only one contract under the social justice and regeneration portfolio has been awarded to British Gas. Eaga Partnership, which delivers the home energy efficiency scheme on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, sub-contract British Gas to manage and complete the process of installation of new gas connections to the homes of eligible households. Since 2000, Eaga Partnership has paid

British Gas £1,596,370 to deliver new gas connections to 3,007 households.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the educational schemes that have been funded by the substance misuse action fund, the amount of money they have received and their purpose and outcome? (WAQ47989)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

Edwina Hart: All the information you have requested has now been collected, and it can be found in the attached table. Detailed information on the outcome of projects would need to be obtained from the relevant community safety partnership.

Resource Materials	Vale of Glamorgan	N/A	£5,000	N/A	N/A	For books, leaflets, videos, personal and social education material for schools.
Resource box, primary school substance misuse education	Vale of Glamorgan	N/A	N/A	£4,500	N/A	For resources to complement the all-Wales schools programme
Computer Software	Vale of Glamorgan	N/A	N/A	£2,000	N/A	For enhancing skills to improve access to education, training and employment opportunities.
HYPE—peer-led drug education programme	Merthyr Tydfil	N/A	£5,000	N/A	N/A	To recruit and train staff and pupils
Youthlink Wales	Based in Caerphilly	£90,000	£80,000	N/A	N/A	Peer-led lifestyle education programme to promote the prevention of substance misuse.
Parenting group	Caerphilly	N/A	N/A	N/A	£14,866	<p>Substance misuse action fund funding will be used to commission additional resources for the drug and alcohol team, to design and facilitate specialist parenting groups.</p> <p>A 10-week pilot group, co-facilitated by the social services drug and alcohol team and Risca/ Caerphilly family centre. The parenting group will provide support, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 access to information to inform and enable parents, 2 support from peers in a therapeutic environment 3 Specialist information based on parents'

						needs
Young person's prevention and training worker	Carmarthenshire	N/A	N/A	£18,375	£25,432	To educate young people about the dangers of drink and drugs and to minimise harm
SUDDS (Safer Under 18 Drink and Drugs)	Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire	£79,408	£81,792	£83,902	£94,975	To educate young people about the dangers of drink and drugs and to minimise harm
Youth worker service	Powys	£53,321	£54,921	£56,294	£57,983	To educate young people about the dangers of drink and drugs and to minimise harm
All-Wales schools programme	Wales-wide	£3,160,000	£3,160,000	£3,160,000	£4,110,000 plus £300,000 for the additional pilot project.	<p>Purpose is to work towards achieving crime and disorder reduction by our young people through the medium of education.</p> <p>It now operates in 97per cent of primary and secondary schools across Wales, and a pilot project is being established to reach disaffected and excluded children.</p> <p>An external evaluation of the project was published in September 2005. The evaluation was positive but identified a need to try to work with disengaged or excluded pupils.</p>

Leanne Wood: What representations has the Minister made to the Home Office to ensure that resources spent on the failed police merger will not affect the financial planning of the four police forces for the current financial year? (WAQ48160)

Leanne Wood: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office regarding financial resources incurred by the four Wales police forces in preparation for proposals for the police merger? (WAQ48161)

Edwina Hart: I wrote to Tony McNulty in July expressing concern about the costs of the failed merger to Welsh forces. The Home Office has since written to all police authorities inviting them to submit details of costs directly incurred in preparing for police restructuring and indicating that they are prepared, in principle, to meet these costs.

Leanne Wood: Has the Minister given any consideration to Welsh Assembly Government services which may be offered through the post office network? (WAQ48162)

Leanne Wood: What consideration has been given to the proposal of asking local authorities to promote the use of post offices as a means of providing services and collecting payments for services? (WAQ48163)

Edwina Hart: The majority of local authority services are delivered either directly to individuals (e.g. education, housing and social care) or to the community as a whole (e.g. waste, transport and leisure services). They cannot sensibly be accessed via a post office.

However, many local authorities can and do use post offices to accept payment of council tax and council house rent,

and to provide information about local services and facilities. I would encourage local authorities to take any and all practical steps to improve engagement and communication in this way, but the detail of how that happens has to rest with each authority.

The Welsh Assembly Government researched policy which could possibly be delivered by or take advantage of the post office network. Since the WAG does not deliver many services directly itself, the possibilities were negligible.

Eleanor Burnham: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office on policing in north Wales? (WAQ48185)

Edwina Hart: I have kept the Assembly fully informed of my discussions with the Home Office on police issues through letters to Assembly Members, regular statements to Plenary and updates to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline Welsh Assembly Government policy on the installation of sprinkler systems in schools in Wales? (WAQ48187) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.*

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson): Currently fire precautions in existing schools are covered by the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997. Sprinklers are not mandatory as part of the regulations but can be installed as an alternative or compensatory feature. Fire precautions in new build and refurbished schools are set by approved document Part B, fire safety (ADB). This document is currently under review and is expected to be issued in April 2007. The current draft ADB includes a note regarding the provision of fire precautions in schools and refers to Building Bulletin 100 (BB100): guidance on 'Managing against the Risk of Fire in New and Refurbished Schools'. This document has also been consulted upon and is in the process of review for issue in England and Wales in April 2007. It also refers to the use of sprinklers, though does not make them mandatory; it suggest them as a solution where identified by a risk assessment.

I would add that local authorities are able to use their annual capital allocations—general capital funding provided through the local government revenue settlement—for any capital purpose, including the installation of sprinklers. Authorities also receive an annual formula allocation of school buildings improvement grant from the Assembly Government, which can only be used for the improvement of school buildings and facilities. This grant can also be used for fire prevention works, including the installation of sprinklers.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Assembly Government support for the voluntary sector in Wales? (WAQ48188)

Edwina Hart: The voluntary sector remains at the forefront of Assembly policy. In partnership with the voluntary and community sector we are developing a strategic action plan for the future development of the sector.

Alun Cairns: What action is the Minister taking to build a consensus among interested parties in relation to housing stock transfers? (WAQ48240)

Edwina Hart: I have had meetings with all stakeholders involved in stock transfer including local authorities, the

WLGA, trade unions and the voluntary sector.