

Answers issued to Members on 27 February 2008

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

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

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

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the average cost of a school meal in each local authority in Wales? (WAQ51228)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the average cost of a school meal in Wales compared to the average cost of a school meal in England? (WAQ51229)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the average cost of a school meal in Wales in each year since 1999? (WAQ51230)

Jane Hutt: This information is not collected centrally—it is a matter for individual authorities.

The Appetite for Life Action Plan, launched on the 22 November 2007, sets out the strategic direction and actions required to improve the provision of food and drink in schools in Wales. It recognises that in undertaking their review of school meal provision it became increasingly apparent to the Food in Schools Working Group that there was a lack of good quality baseline data available to help inform decisions on the levels of financial investment required to fully implement the changes it proposed. Limited information is collected at a national level and frequently data collected at a local level are not collected on a consistent or comparable basis. For example, the formula for calculating the cost of a school meal varies from one local authority to another. Whilst respondents to the Appetite for Life consultation exercise were generally in favour of a common formula being devised for use across Wales for the cost of school meals there was some concern over how this data would be interpreted. For example, does a lower commodity cost necessarily indicate a poor quality meal, or strong purchasing skills, or both? Any analysis of such costs would need to take into account a range of factors including location of schools and size of contract. The intention would be to identify the true cost of producing school meals and to compare this with the income received.

In order to take this forward, the Welsh Assembly Government is seeking to develop, in discussion with local authorities, an agreed approach to calculating the cost of producing a school meal.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Does the Assembly Government have any plans to review the advice it has issued regarding the minimum distance between a wind turbine and a dwelling, in particular with reference to making what is now only advice into a legal requirement? (WAQ51382)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): The Assembly Government has no plans to review the advice contained within TAN 8: Planning for Renewable Energy, which states that 500m is considered a typical separation distance between a wind turbine and residential property to avoid unacceptable noise impacts. It considers that local planning authorities are best able to evaluate this issue on a case-by-case basis, taking into account topography and orientation, when taking decisions on planning applications.

Questions to the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What discussions has the Minister had with Westminster regarding the use of private finance initiatives and other public-private partnerships in the delivery of public services in Wales? (WAQ51223)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What studies have been conducted by the Welsh Assembly Government over the value for money that private finance initiatives and other public-private partnerships can have, if used in public service delivery? (WAQ51227)

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery (Andrew Davies): I am replying to the listed questions together as they address similar issues regarding the use of private funding in the delivery of public services.

Over the past six months, I have conducted a number of discussions with both the public and private sector over the use of public-private partnerships. These discussions have not centred on the private finance initiative, but have explored the wider range of innovative funding models which could be applied to projects in Wales.

You will also be aware that the Finance Committee is currently considering the evidence it received during the recent inquiry into public-private partnerships.

Any decision to pursue private sector funding models will also take account of the many studies and reports that are available in the public domain regarding the value for money that private finance initiatives and other public-private partnerships can have, if used in public service delivery. Whilst these may not have been conducted by the Welsh Assembly Government, they do provide a broad pool of information and analysis upon which I can base decisions in this area.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the number of cancelled operations at NHS hospitals in Wales in each year since 1999? (WAQ51142)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What is the estimated cost of cancelled operations in NHS hospitals in Wales in each year since 1999? (WAQ51143)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): Although cancelled operations data have been collected from June 2002, initially, not all trusts submitted the data. The full data have been submitted from January 2003, and includes cancellations by the patient, cancellations by the hospital for clinical reasons and cancellations by the hospital for non-clinical reasons. The data in the table below give the number of cancelled operations in each year.

Year	No of cancelled operations
2003	44,068
2004	38,027
2005	38,372
2006	34,239
2007	34,743

It should be noted that an operation is classed as cancelled once the patient has received a verbal or written notification of the date of operation and is subsequently cancelled. Not all cancellations result in the loss of a theatre slot. During the same period, over 1.1 million operations have taken place in NHS Wales.

It is not possible to estimate the cost of cancelled operations to the NHS in Wales.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the bowel cancer screening programme that is set to roll out in 2008, in particular how is the campaign to be organised, when the campaign is to be announced, and what budget there is for the campaign? (WAQ51259)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What discussions does the Minister propose to have with voluntary organisations in relation to the running of the bowel cancer screening programme, and what discussions has she already had with such organisations? (WAQ51260)

Edwina Hart: A bowel cancer screening programme will be implemented for men and women aged between 50 and 74 in Wales. Full roll-out of the programme will be phased, starting with 60 to 69-year-olds, followed by 70 to 74-year-olds and finally 50 to 59-year-olds. As commissioners of the service, Health Commission Wales has received £800,000 in 2007-08 to take this programme forward. The planning phase is well under way, with first screening planned to start in October 2008.

In order to achieve maximum benefit in public health terms we need to ensure that public awareness is raised to maximise screening uptake. As part of the planning work currently under way, Velindre NHS Trust, which will provide the service, is developing a public awareness and marketing strategy in consultation with potential user groups, healthcare professionals and voluntary organisations. A key objective of the consultation process is to establish the most effective method of engagement, information provision and support for men and women across a diverse range of ability, language and cultural influence within communities throughout Wales.

The cost of this strategy, which builds on current screening promotion activity, is planned to be around £140,000 and will be implemented in earnest, approximately one month ahead of the October 2008 start date.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Does the Minister intend on collating the number of cancelled GP appointments centrally? (WAQ51368)

Edwina Hart: I have no plans to collect this information centrally. Monitoring of general medical services is the responsibility of local health boards.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly's policy towards the introduction of polyclinics in the UK? (WAQ51369)

Edwina Hart: I am aware that the Department of Health is considering the introduction of polyclinics in England but it would be inappropriate for me to make any further comment at this stage, as this is an English policy. 'One Wales' includes a commitment to the development of wellbeing centres and this Assembly Government policy is currently in the process of development.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many units of dental and orthodontic activity have been commissioned in Wales by the NHS through companies such as Denticare or similar private organisations since April 2006? (WAQ51370)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many patients in Wales have been treated in Wales by the NHS through companies such as Denticare or similar private organisations since April 2006? (WAQ51371)

Edwina Hart: This information is not held centrally.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the rates of growth and decline of the NHS and private practice in the provision of dental treatment since April 2006? (WAQ51372)

Edwina Hart: Details about the number of NHS dentists and the number of patients treated under the NHS, both before and since April 2006, are available at: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx> Information on private dental services is not collected centrally.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the relative rates of the number of band 1, band 2 and band 3 treatments made by dentists working in private health practices and the NHS before and after April 2006? (WAQ51373)

Edwina Hart: Banded NHS dental treatment was introduced on 1 April 2006. Details of treatment by band is available at: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>.

Prior to April 2006, NHS dental services were listed in the statement of dental remuneration (SDR), which contained over 400 individual courses of treatment. It is not possible to compare like for like. Neither the current banded system nor the previous SDR apply to dentists who undertake private treatment.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on waiting lists for orthodontic treatments in Wales before and after April 2006? (WAQ51374)

Edwina Hart: Waiting lists for an initial outpatient appointment for orthodontic treatment in a hospital setting were 3,665 at the end of March 2006. There were 3,601 waiting at the end of April 2006. At the end of December 2007, the most recent data available, there were 2,814 waiting. Of these patients, 502 had been waiting over 22 weeks.

Primary care orthodontic waiting times data is not collected centrally.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the number of orthodontic specialists who have left the NHS every year since 1999? (WAQ51375)

Edwina Hart: This information is not held centrally.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Has the new dentist contract of April 2006 seen an increase in the number of children and adults who have access to dental treatment? (WAQ51376)

Edwina Hart: A direct comparison cannot be made as the requirement to register with a dentist for NHS treatment, which was the previous measure of accessibility, ended when the new contract was introduced.

However, on 31 March 2006 47.7 per cent of the population were registered for NHS treatment—59.1 per cent of the child population and 44.4 per cent of the adult population. In the 24 months to 31 March 2007, 56 per cent of the population received NHS dental treatment—65 per cent of the child population and 53 per cent of the adult population.

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on what steps she and her officials have taken to tackle the phenomenon of Anaesthetic Awareness? (WAQ51377)

Edwina Hart: I am assured by my Deputy Chief Medical Officer, who until last year was the Professor of Anaesthetics in Cardiff and is the immediate past president of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, that in Wales we have both the calibre of anaesthetist and the appropriate equipment to limit as far as possible the likelihood of awareness occurring.

Anaesthetists in Wales are also currently evaluating newer monitors to assess the potential for awareness.

Alun Cairns (South Wales West): Will the Minister provide details of the cost required to upgrade, repair, or replace NHS infrastructure? (WAQ51386)

Edwina Hart: There is no formal mechanism for collating information about the cost required to upgrade, repair, or replace NHS infrastructure.

Questions to the Minister for Heritage

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What discussions has the Minister had with the Westminster Government regarding the impact of the planned digital television switchover in Wales? (WAQ51175)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What percentage of households in Wales do not currently receive digital television? (WAQ51176)

The Minister for Heritage (Rhodri Glyn Thomas): I am in regular contact with Westminster Ministers regarding digital switchover and the Welsh Assembly Government is represented on the UK Government's digital switchover group.

Latest figures from Digital UK show that 10 per cent of households in Wales do not currently receive digital television.

Irene James (Islwyn): Has the Welsh Assembly Government allocated any money for the restoration of Newbridge Institute and Memorial Hall? (WAQ51378)

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: The Assembly Government's historic environment division, Cadw, has allocated grant of almost £130,000 for the first phase of works to restore the historically important Newbridge Institute and Memorial Hall. My officials will look sympathetically at any application for grant for future phases of work.

Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs

Lorraine Barrett (Cardiff South and Penarth): Will the Minister make a statement on the use of snares in Wales? (WAQ51381)

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones): The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently launched a project examining the use and humaneness of snares in England and Wales. Officials are fully participating and the results will help determine the way forward in Wales. In the meantime, the Welsh Assembly Government is urging users of snares to follow the code of practice.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What representations has the Minister made to the Home Office regarding the police pay arbitration award? (WAQ51066)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office regarding the police pay arbitration award? (WAQ51067)

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Brian Gibbons): Police pay is a matter for the Home Secretary. I confirmed during the minority party debate in Plenary on police support on 30 January that I have written to the Home Secretary expressing the disappointment of the Assembly Government and Assembly Members at the decision not to meet fully the recommendation of the independent Police Pay Review.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What discussions has the Minister had with Westminster regarding the use of public finance initiatives and other public-private partnerships in the delivery of public services by local authorities in Wales? (WAQ51222)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on what review the Welsh Assembly Government has given to the use of private finance initiatives and other public-private partnerships by local authorities? (WAQ51224)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the cost of any private finance initiatives and other public-private partnership contracts which have been entered into by local authorities in Wales since 1999? (WAQ51225)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister list any private finance initiatives and other public-private partnership contracts which local authorities in Wales have entered into since 1999? (WAQ51226)

Brian Gibbons: I am replying to the listed questions together as they address similar issues relating to the use in local authorities of the private finance initiative and of wider public-private partnership models.

I have had not discussed with Westminster the use of PFI and other public-private partnerships, nor has the Welsh Assembly Government reviewed their use in local authorities.

In Wales, local authorities operate to a shared responsibility in the delivery of public services. They have freedom and flexibilities to provide an autonomous service and have access to private sector funding through prudential borrowing powers or other arrangements.

I attach below, as requested, a list of local authority schemes that are supported by the Assembly through PFI credits. Additional schemes, funded either publicly or through public-private partnerships will, however, be a matter for each individual authority and are therefore not listed here.

Local Authority Projects:	Project Approval Date	Final WO/WAG Approval Date	Estimated Start/Completion Date
Wrexham: Waste Management	1997	Mar-07	May 07/April 09
Ceredigion: New School	1997	Sep-99	Operational Dec 2000
Pembrokeshire: New School and Offices	1997	Jun-00	Operational Sep 2002
Denbighshire: CC Office Accommodation	1997	Oct-02	Oct-02/May-04

Newport: Southern Distributor Road (SDR)	1997	Mar-02	April-02/April-05
Caerphilly: Schools	1997/1999	Mar-01	Operational Sep 2002
Bridgend: Schools	1999	Oct-06	Nov06/June08
Caerphilly: Sirhowy Enterprise Way	1999	Nov-03	Jan 04/Apr 06
Conway: Schools	1999	Mar-03	Apr 03/Aug 04
Newport: School	1999	Aug-07	Apr08/Dec 09
Rhondda Cynon Taff: Schools	1999	Mar-04	Mar 04/Sep 05