

Answers issued to Members on 19 March 2009

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

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

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

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): When will the school improvement Capital Grants funding be announced and what changes have been made in the process recently? (WAQ53713)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): The key change to the process relates to the release of residual capital grant from within the existing SBIG budget to support the transition arrangements for implementation of the 21st Century Schools programme, which I announced in Plenary on 3rd February 2009. All Local Education Authorities have been invited to submit proposals for capital investment in schools and I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on support available to Allotment Associations in the creation of new allotments? (WAQ53742)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): Allotments provision is a matter for Local Authorities who are duty bound to provide allotments if they consider that there is a demand for them. However, the Welsh Assembly Government directly supports a number of schemes which can potentially be used to assist the development and upkeep of allotments, such as Environment Wales, the Tidy Towns initiative and Local Environmental Quality Improvement Projects grants.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister make a statement on the roll of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit? (WAQ53747)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): The role of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit was to analyse prescribing data and use the information gained to promote effective prescribing across Wales.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister provide an estimate of the cost of the new NHS Advisory Board which the Minister will be chairing? (WAQ53748)

Edwina Hart: As my preferred option is for the National Board is a National Advisory Board, there will be minimal implementation and running costs. The fact that I am going to Chair these meetings has minimised these costs further.

Estimated costs for the running of the National Advisory Board include secretariat support in the region of £50,000 and remuneration costs in the region of £20,000 for the five Independent Members.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How will the Minister ensure that NICE and AWMSG guidance is followed in the absence of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit? (WAQ53749)

Edwina Hart: I am currently considering a Statutory Direction that will put the All Wales Medicine Strategy Group (AWMSG) guidance on an equal footing with that of the National Institute of Clinical

Excellence (NICE) in Wales. This will ensure that Local Health Boards (LHB) will be required to implement AWMSG recommendations within three months.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How much money was spent on the preliminary set-up of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit before funding was withdrawn? (WAQ53750)

Edwina Hart: £115,000 was spent in 2008-9 on the preliminary set-up of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit before funding for 2009-10 was withdrawn.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Can the Minister confirm that funding is available for the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit for 2010-11? (WAQ53751)

Edwina Hart: I cannot confirm this at this time. I will re-consider funding for WAPSU for financial year 2010-11 in September 2009, alongside other funding pressures.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister explain why funding for the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit has been withdrawn? (WAQ53752)

Edwina Hart: In September 2007 I announced the draft budget allocations across my portfolio covering health and social services. The financial settlement was extremely challenging and that some very difficult decisions had to be made.

After very carefully considering all of the existing commitments and all new demands that are being made of the NHS I determined that I would not be able to fund the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit after March 2009.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister make a statement on the impact of her recent decision on the availability of renal cancer medicines? (WAQ53753)

Edwina Hart: My decision to make these drugs available has been warmly welcomed by kidney cancer patients, their relatives and carers.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What assessment has the Minister made of the impact on the NHS of missed appointments? (WAQ53754)

Edwina Hart: I recognise that the cost of missed appointments to the NHS in Wales is great. NHS Trusts monitor the numbers of missed appointments across Wales and are actively seeking ways to reduce these numbers, through improved communication with patients, such as the telephone reminder system in operation within Bro Morgannwg. There is also a responsibility on patients to attend their appointments, or to let Trusts know that they are going to be unable to attend.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister make a statement on her response to the NICE consultation on the Topic Selection Process for Technology Appraisals? (WAQ53760)

Edwina Hart: I welcome NICE's proposals to speed up their topic selection process and would encourage patients, the public and health professionals to respond to the NICE consultation document by the deadline of 22 May 2009.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister explain the policy objectives behind her decision to ban the sale of confectionary in hospital vending machines? (WAQ53761)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving the diet of our population. We have developed a range of policies and programmes which aim to create an environment where healthy eating is the easiest choice. I believe our public sector settings, particularly our hospitals, should be an exemplar of best practice in this regard.

Through the 'Free to Lead, Free to Care' programme we are implementing our One Wales commitment to improve hospital food and nutrition. This work could be undermined if we do not ensure that other food outlets within our hospitals are also promoting healthy food and drink. I have been particularly concerned about vending machines which have been providing unhealthy food and drink to patients, visitors and staff. It is for that reason that I have asked NHS hospitals in Wales to remove all unhealthy food and drink from vending machines and replace them with healthier options.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What discussions has the Minister had about potential abuse of the free hospital car parking policy? (WAQ53762)

Edwina Hart: My officials are working closely with NHS Trusts to identify (and where necessary control) the potential abuse of my reform on car parking charges at hospital sites.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What estimate has the Minister made of the proportion of prescription medicines that are wasted? (WAQ53764)

Edwina Hart: Good practice is to issue 28 day supplies for patients, however it is recognised that for patients with stable long-term conditions larger supplies may be appropriate (that decision is taken on an individual basis).

Data regarding unused medicines and the cost implications is not held centrally. Local Health Boards have been encouraged to review their medicines management processes and to reduce the potential for wastage of medicines e.g. a number have run advertising campaigns to raise public awareness of the need to any request medicines actually required when asking for repeat prescriptions.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How much funding has NICE received from the Welsh Assembly Government for each year since 1999? (WAQ53765)

Edwina Hart: This information is available in the public domain.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How much funding has AWMSG received from the Welsh Assembly Government for each year since the body's inception? (WAQ53767)

Edwina Hart: Since the establishment of AWMSG in 2002, the following funding has been provided:

2002/03	£328,000
2003/04	£337,000
2004/05	£337,000
2005/06	£387,000
2006/07	£476,000 *
2007/08	£441,000
2008/09	£456,000

*(For 06/07 the AWMSG budget line was merged with the budget line for WeMeReC).

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister explain why there are 100,000 more patients registered with GPs in Wales than the population of Wales? (WAQ53768)

Edwina Hart: List inflation is a longstanding problem which occurs right across the UK. It is caused by movements in population. There is no single explanation. It happens because people move from Wales without notifying the relevant authorities. There may also be administrative delays in deleting patients from lists when they die or move to another practice.

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): When will the standardisation of operations tariffs across England and Wales be brought in? (WAQ53770)

Edwina Hart: My officials are still in discussions with the Department of Health.

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister provide figures on the number of people in Wales with cancer? (WAQ53784)

Edwina Hart: The information you require has been published by Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit in its report, 'Prevalence Statistics in Wales as of 31st December 2007'. This document can be found at <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=242&pid=33893>

Alun Cairns (South Wales West): Will the Minister list, on a per hospital basis, the operations that were not conducted as required by their 'work sheet' (or that have been conducted incorrectly)? (WAQ53779)

Edwina Hart: This information is not held centrally.

Peter Black (South Wales West): Will the Minister make a statement on the savings accumulated by the Health Budget as a result of the temporary cut in VAT? (WAQ53780)

Edwina Hart: This information is not collected centrally.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What estimate has the Welsh Assembly Government made of the costs of providing vitamin D supplements to everyone whom NICE suggests and particularly children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years and pregnant or breastfeeding woman? (WAQ53782)

Edwina Hart: Information on Vitamin D prescribed for children, pregnant or breastfeeding women is not collected by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How much money does the Welsh Assembly Government spend on providing vitamin D supplements for children aged between 6 months and 4 years and for pregnant or breastfeeding women? (WAQ53783)

Edwina Hart: This information is not collected by the Welsh Assembly Government.