

## **Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 12 August 2009**

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

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

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***To ask the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills***

**Brynle Williams (North Wales):** Will the Minister detail, by local education authority, the number of pupils excluded from primary schools in north Wales in each of the last five years (WAQ54637)

***Answer issued on 12 August 2009***

The information requested is in the table below. Both permanent and fixed term exclusions of any length are included. Figures show the number of exclusions, not the number of pupils excluded. If pupils are excluded more than once they will be counted more than once. Permanent and fixed term exclusions from maintained primary schools in north Wales, by local authority, are as follows.

**Permanent and fixed term exclusions from maintained primary schools in North Wales, by local authority**

*Number of exclusions*

	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Isle of Anglesey	7	12	60	13	15
Gwynedd	20	14	20	14	19
Conwy	36	59	32	33	50
Denbighshire	98	64	78	68	69
Flintshire	52	91	95	113	96
Wrexham	61	99	66	71	62
<b>North Wales</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>311</b>

Source: Pupil Exclusion Record, Welsh Assembly Government

**Paul Davies (Preseli Pembrokeshire):** Will the Minister confirm how many local authorities expect to have all schools fit for purpose by a) 2010 b) 2015 and c) 2020 (WAQ54661)

***Answer issued on 12 August 2009***

The timetables are a matter for local authorities. Carmarthenshire local authority expects to have over 60 per cent of their modernising education programme completed by 2010, and fully completed by 2015. Of the remaining 21 authorities, 10 expect to have achieved the fitness target by 2015 and 11 by 2020.

**Paul Davies (Preseli Pembrokeshire):** Will the Minister provide an estimated value of the backlog of school-building repairs in Wales (WAQ54662)

***Answer issued on 12 August 2009***

If no action was taken to remove surplus places and no action taken to invest in new build and renovation, latest estimates place the figure for the backlog repair and maintenance figure for school buildings at £818 million. In most cases new buildings or renewal of existing buildings will remove, and consequently reduce, the requirement for repairs and maintenance.

***To ask the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport***

**Mike German (South Wales East):** What discussions or correspondence has the Minister had with UK Government officials, departments or Ministers regarding the electrification of the Great Western Railway Mail Line diversionary route via Gloucester-Swindon. (WAQ54625)

**Mike German (South Wales East):** What consideration has the Minister given to increasing the resilience of the Great Western Main Line electrification project by lobbying the Westminster Government on the electrification of the diversionary route via Gloucester-Swindon. (WAQ54626)

***Answer issued on 23 September 2009***

I have not had any such discussions; however I have already asked my officials to work with the Department for Transport and Network Rail to consider the case for electrification of this line.

**Nick Bourne (Mid & West Wales):** Will the Minister provide an update on the proposed plans to redevelop Aberystwyth Town Centre. (WAQ54647)

***Answer issued on 12 August 2009***

**The Deputy Minister for Regeneration( Leighton Andrews):** My officials are continuing to discuss with officials of Ceredigion County Council their aspirations for the regeneration of Aberystwyth. The comments received from recent stakeholder meetings and community representatives on the private sector proposals for the Post Office site have been passed on to the developers. The Council has asked for this feedback to be addressed in working up alternative options for the site. I understand that further work is taking place and that further discussions are expected in due course.

**Mark Isherwood (North Wales):** Noting that the budget round is approaching, what plan and timescale is in place or is intended for the consultations by the Community Transport Association with local community transport schemes on changed criteria for next year. (WAQ54652)

***Answer issued on 23 September 2009***

My officials met with the Community Transport Association Cymru in July 2009 to agree the content of the consultation exercise that will be taking place with the 15 operators within the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI).

The Community Transport Association Cymru will start the consultation exercise with the operators no later than September 2009, and I will then review the outcome of this prior to making a decision on the future direction and scope of the initiative.

**Mark Isherwood (North Wales):** What action is the Minister taking to address the effects (including those on cash flow) for those Community Transport Schemes which are advising that they are experiencing problems in receiving payment on time of monies sent by the Welsh Assembly Government to the Community Transport Association, Hyde. (WAQ54653)

***Answer issued on 23 September 2009***

My officials have discussed this matter with the Community Transport Association and, barring any unforeseen circumstances, there should be no further delays in making advance quarterly payments to the 15 operators within the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative. The next payment is due in October 2009.

My officials are not aware of any cash flow problems caused by the small delay in processing advance payments during the first two quarters of 2009/10, although any further information that you may have about this would be helpful.

**Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central):** Will the Minister confirm whether or not the policy of free bus passes for all those over sixty in Wales will remain in place during the lifetime of this Government. (WAQ54660)

*Answer issued on 23 September 2009*

I have no plans whatsoever to abandon this highly successful and popular scheme. I also have no plans to reduce the entitlement or eligibility criteria of elderly or disabled people under the scheme.

*To ask the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing*

**Mark Isherwood (North Wales):** When tenants are allocated to properties under rent to purchase scheme of the strategic capital investment framework, must they comply with, or are they exempt from, normal priority housing need allocation requirements (WAQ54629)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

**The Deputy Minister for Housing (Jocelyn Davies):** For clarification, the strategic capital investment fund is a source of capital funding with no link as such to allocation policies. There is no rent to purchase scheme in operation in Wales as far as we are aware. However, the housing division has submitted a bid to the strategic capital investment fund tranche 2 programme for a pilot intermediate housing market scheme, along with other housing based proposals for affordable housing measures to support the housing market. The outcome of the bid will be known in late autumn. This bid, along with others, is currently under consideration by Ministers and it is not appropriate to discuss it in any more detail at this stage.

Local authorities and housing associations are required under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 to allocate housing to applicants in accordance with a published scheme which is available to members of the public. Authorities and associations are responsible for setting their own rules governing such schemes, but must give reasonable preference to a number of categories of applicants in housing need. You will be able to obtain further information from local authorities and housing associations on the allocation scheme that they use. The Assembly Government provides guidance to local authorities on how to implement the law by issuing a Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (2003). Some housing has eligibility criteria such as sheltered or special needs accommodation, but all housing would be within the local authority allocations procedure.

**Nick Ramsay (Monmouth):** What guidance has the Minister issued to local authorities to ensure that the decommissioning of redundant steelwork sites does not result in dangerously high levels of toxicity in the atmosphere (WAQ54630)

*Answers issued on 12 August 2009*

The contaminated land regime under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 may be used to address historical contamination of land and the risks it can pose to people's health and the environment including during the decommissioning of a redundant steelwork site. The contaminated land regime requires local authorities to identify contaminated land, and where a possibility of significant harm exists

to investigate remediation of the land. Statutory guidance has been provided to help local authorities with their duties under the contaminated land regime.

<http://wales.gov.uk/desh/policy/enviroprotect/contaminatedland/documents/statguide.doc?lang=en>

Steelmaking activities usually fall under the scope of the environmental permitting regime, which is regulated by either the Environment Agency or the local authority. When a steelworks is decommissioned the operator is required to surrender its permit and demonstrate that the site has been returned to a satisfactory state. This is defined in paragraphs 6.26 to 6.33 of the joint Defra and Welsh Assembly Government Environmental Permitting Core Guidance below:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/epp/documents/core-guidance.pdf>

The Welsh Assembly Government has jointly developed guidance with Defra and other organisations regarding the model procedures for the process of remediating contaminated land. The Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination have been developed to provide the technical framework for applying a risk management process when dealing with land affected by contamination. The process involves identifying, making decisions on, and taking appropriate action to deal with land contamination in a way that is consistent with government policies and legislation within the UK. This guidance is published on the Environment Agency's website (link below):

[http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/model\\_procedures\\_881483.pdf](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/model_procedures_881483.pdf)

**Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central):** Will the Minister make a statement on the length of the decision-making process to determine the result of EU funding applications for flood prevention (WAQ54642)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

European funding for flood prevention works in Wales has been sought on the basis of a strategic bid led by the Welsh Assembly Government. This approach reduces project management costs and encourages more strategic investment for Wales. To date I have successfully bid for monies from the convergence programme and I am preparing a bid for funding from the competitiveness programme. If both of these bids are successful then there will be additional support for works across the whole of Wales. All bids for European funding go through a three-stage process as prescribed by the Welsh European Funding Office. The first provides details of the project idea; the second is a formal expression of interest and the final stage the submission of a business case. The approval process can take many months. However, it enables a comprehensive assessment of applications prior to the release of EU funding. In the case of the convergence programme bid the process commenced in April 2007 and formal approval was received in December 2008. Our business case for competitiveness funding was submitted in June 2009 and finalised shortly after. We have been working closely with the WEFO to develop this bid and expect to receive a funding decision in the very near future.

Regarding the benefits from these additional funds, operational delivery of the first 12 schemes supported through the convergence programme has commenced. This additional £30 million will enable us to reduce flood and coastal risk for over 2,000 homes and businesses in Wales, including vulnerable areas such as Tywyn, Rhyl and Rhydyfelin in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which suffered severe flooding in June this year.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What research is the Welsh Assembly Government currently undertaking into using wave and tidal power for energy generation in Wales (WAQ54648)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

In 2007 Wales commissioned the marine renewable energy strategic framework to gather the environmental and technical data to underpin the way forward for marine energy in Wales. The three

year project, covering wind, wave and tidal energy, will assist in the identification of optimum and sustainable energy extraction with minimum environmental impact.

The first stage of the project—the data collection exercise and identification of data gaps—was completed in 2008. The project is now in its second stage filling the critical data gaps identified during stage 1. The stage 2 research studies, which focus mainly on wave and tidal energy, are key to the development of the framework and include collision risks to marine mammals, fish and diving birds, potential effects of wave and tidal devices on military interests, and a study to look at the positive effects associated with marine renewables. The stage 2 studies will be of enormous benefit in expanding our knowledge base and widening our understanding of the effects of wave and tidal devices on the marine environment. Based upon the knowledge base produced during stage 1 and 2, the third stage of the project will develop scenarios for sustainable renewable developments in Welsh waters and advise on how the marine environment of Wales can be best safeguarded, enhanced and made more accessible within the overall marine renewable energy strategy.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** What financial support is available for the installation of wood fuel heating systems (WAQ54663)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

Grants for the installation of microgeneration technologies, including wood fuel heating systems, are available through phase 1 of the UK Government's low carbon buildings programme. Under the programme, householders can apply for up to a maximum of £2,500 for each technology installed and applications are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Details of all aspects of the LCBP phase 1 grant application process, suppliers, installers and technologies can be found at the following website – <http://www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase1.org.uk>.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** Will the consultation on the home energy efficiency scheme include provision for financial support for wood fuel heating systems (WAQ54664)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

Our proposal for the future of the home energy efficiency scheme, which was set out in the draft national energy efficiency and savings plan, is to take a whole house approach to households in need. Homes will be assessed to determine how the heating costs and carbon emissions can be reduced in the most cost-effective way, within the maximum grant available. For some homes, the assessment may determine that the most appropriate and cost-effective way to make improvements to the property is to install a wood fuel heating system. More details on our fuel poverty programmes will be set out in our revised fuel poverty strategy, which will go out to consultation before the end of the summer, and in the proposed amendments to the existing home energy efficiency scheme regulations, which should go out to consultation in the autumn.

*To ask the Minister for Health and Social Services*

**Mike German (South Wales East):** Will the Minister confirm that the Gwent Specialist Critical Care Centre will now go ahead and that the development will now be phased, giving an indication of the timing and nature of the phasing (WAQ54621)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

I have confirmed that the proposed Specialist and Critical Care Centre will go ahead and be located on the Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital site. The nature and timing of phased development will depend on approvable business cases which are still in preparation.

**Lynne Neagle (Torfaen):** Will the Minister provide details on how parents of pre-school children are being targeted in the MMR uptake campaign (WAQ54631)

**Lynne Neagle (Torfaen):** Will the Minister detail all the actions being taken by the Welsh Assembly Government across Wales to increase the uptake of the MMR jab (WAQ54651)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

A leaflet entitled 'Pre-school immunisations - a guide to vaccinations for 3 to 5-year-olds', is already in circulation amongst health professionals and parents. A new measles poster and factsheet has recently been distributed to health professionals, GPs surgeries and health protection teams. These support existing promotional material. To remind parents about the seriousness of measles, we redistributed copies of the DVD 'Immunisation – Why our children must be protected', to all outbreak areas. In addition, the National Public Health Service are supporting the Welsh Assembly Government by working very closely with front-line health professionals to monitor outbreaks and support efforts to ensure that all children in the outbreak areas have received two vaccinations. To highlight the benefits of MMR immunisation more widely and encourage uptake, several measures are being taken:

- regular NPHS press releases informing the public about the current situation and the health risks;
- regular updates of the NPHS website;
- local GP practices increasing their efforts to identify registered children with incomplete MMR status to ensure they are offered immunisation; and
- support provided to NHS staff who are in contact with schools and nurseries in the outbreak areas.

I am considering further additional information needs and will provide an update to members in due course.

**Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central):** How many critical care beds have been available in Welsh hospitals in each year since 1999 (WAQ54638)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

Figures on the daily average number of critical care beds in Wales are available from 2000/2001. The following figures are taken from the final quarter of each financial year.

Year	Beds
2000/2001	198.8
2001/2002	207.97
2002/2003	213.44
2003/2004	215.6
2004/2005*	157.72
2005/2006*	158.14
2006/2007*	174.94

2007/2008*	165.81
2008/2009*	181.77

\* Comparisons should not be made between data for 2004/05 onwards and previous years. Morriston and Singleton Hospitals have not supplied any High Dependency Unit or Intensive Care bed figures since 2004/2005.

**Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central):** Will the Minister make a statement on discussions she has held with the General Medical Council (WAQ54639)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

I recently met with the General Medical Council to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

**Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central):** What is the cost to the NHS in Wales of missed GP appointments and will the Minister provide a breakdown by LHB area (WAQ54640)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

This information is not held centrally.

**Peter Black (South Wales West):** Is there a system for monitoring understaffing or unsafe staffing levels within the Welsh NHS on a national level (WAQ54643)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

NHS organisations are responsible for determining staffing levels in order to respond to service needs. If an organisation has specific concerns about staffing levels they will report this to regional office alongside developing contingency plans to deal with the problem.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister make a statement about the shortage of doctors at Withybush Hospital (WAQ54644)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister make a statement about the shortage of doctors at Prince Phillip Hospital (WAQ54645)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What is the Minister doing to recruit more doctors to work in Mid and West Wales (WAQ54646)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

In common with other hospitals across the UK, Hywel Dda NHS Trust is facing difficulties in recruiting junior doctors. Officials are working with the post-graduate deanery, trusts and local health boards to improve recruitment of doctors in Wales. The deanery and BMA have produced a DVD which describes the NHS in Wales and outlines the advantages and opportunities of working in Wales. A junior doctor review group is also being established with the remit to review recruitment, training schemes, rotas and working conditions to promote a positive image of working as a junior doctor in NHS Wales.

Meetings have been held with the UK Borders Agency to seek clarity on the new immigration rules and to convey concerns about the effects the changes are having on recruitment of non-EU doctors to Wales.



Evidence is also being provided to the Migration Advisory Committee to inform any future decisions they make regarding entry to the UK for non-EU doctors.

**Lynne Neagle (Torfaen):** Will the Minister provide a breakdown of capital expenditure in the health service by local authority for each month from the beginning of the third Assembly (WAQ54649)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

The Welsh Assembly Government does not collate information on health service capital expenditure by local authority.

**Darren Millar (Clwyd West):** Will the Minister make a statement on the 24-week limit for abortions and whether she has plans to review this (WAQ54654)

**Darren Millar (Clwyd West):** Will the Minister make a statement on whether she plans to review the age of consent for abortions (WAQ54655)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

The Abortion Act 1967 is not a devolved Act and therefore the Welsh Assembly Government is unable to amend policy in relation to abortion.

**Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North):** Will the Minister outline what will be regarded as fulfilling the 'One Wales' commitment to end the use of private sector hospitals by 2011 (WAQ54656)

**Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North):** What guidance or instruction has been issued to NHS Wales to ensure implementation of the 'One Wales' commitment to end the use of private sector hospitals by 2011 (WAQ54657)

**Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North):** Will the Minister outline what assessment of existing NHS capacity has been undertaken in pursuance of the 'One Wales' commitment to end the use of private-sector hospitals by 2011 (WAQ54658)

**Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North):** Will the Minister confirm by which date the 'One Wales' commitment to end the use of private sector hospitals by 2011 will have to be reached (WAQ54659)

*Answer issued on 12 August 2009*

The Welsh Assembly Government continues to performance manage the NHS through the annual operating framework. We are placing a greater emphasis on planning for 2009-10, with the aim of eliminating the need to use private sector hospitals in NHS Wales by 2011. Current information indicates a decrease in the number of patients being treated by alternative providers.

### *To ask the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government*

**Sandy Mewies (Delyn):** Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government records and maintains information about people with autism who access employment schemes (WAQ54622)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

Responsibility for policy/ administration in relation to job search and employment support, social security, pensions and child support remains with the UK Government. Records and information relating to these employment programmes are therefore held by the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus in Wales. The Assembly Government supports individuals' transition to employment through training programmes such as work-based learning, ProAct and ReAct and advice through Careers Wales. At present we have no record of individuals accessing ReAct who are diagnosed with autism. Similarly, there have been no requests for additional learning support for learners diagnosed with autism in work-based learning.

**Sandy Mewies (Delyn):** Will the Minister make a statement on what training Disability employment advisors and personal advisors within Jobcentre Plus receive to support people with autism (WAQ54623)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions. Consequently, general policy responsibility for it, for training disability employment advisers and personal advisors, for work-related benefits and access to UK Government employment scheme—compulsory or voluntary—rests with the UK Government.

Nevertheless, the Assembly Government endeavours to ensure a joined-up approach between devolved and non-devolved functions and programmes. For example, we have agreed arrangements for the referral eligible Jobcentre Plus customers to our Skillbuild programme. Furthermore Careers Wales works closely with Jobcentre Plus in providing support for individuals – an example being the 'team Wales' approach to assist people affected by redundancy.

**Sandy Mewies (Delyn):** Will the Minister make a statement on what action the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to ensure that people with autism are aware of their rights and entitlements regarding access to employment schemes (WAQ54624)

*Answer issued on 17 August 2009*

The Assembly Government has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Action Plan for Wales and as part of its implementation we are considering how to develop an approach to raise the awareness and understanding of autism across Wales. Employment is a matter that is being considered as part of the work of the Assembly Government external 'Adults with ASD Task and Finish Group' that is due to report to Welsh Ministers shortly.

Once again, it should be emphasised that general responsibility for employment lies with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions.