

## **Written Questions answered from 28 December 2000 to 4 January 2001**

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

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## Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

### Discussions with the Welsh Language Board

**David Melding:** Would the Minister for Health and Social Services hold discussions with the Welsh Language Board to review national health service public appointments and the need for linguistic representation? (WAQ8715)

**The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt):** The Standing Committee on Equality of Opportunity is currently looking at the issues of public appointments and the Welsh language in terms of equality of opportunity. A paper on the latter is due to be presented to the Committee and will be discussed early in the new year. In addition, NHS Directorate officials meet regularly with the Welsh Language Board to discuss items of common interest and it would be appropriate for representatives of the Directorate's NHS public appointments branch to attend the next meeting where these appointment issues can be discussed. I would be happy to have a meeting following this if that would be helpful.

### Mental Health Services Strategy

**David Melding:** Would Jane Hutt make a statement on the consultation response received from Mind Cymru on the proposed adult mental health services strategy? (WAQ8716)

**David Melding:** Would Jane Hutt make a statement on the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 on the proposed adult mental health services strategy? (WAQ8717)

**David Melding:** Would Jane Hutt make a statement on the likely implications for the proposed child and adolescent mental health services strategy? (WAQ8718)

**Jane Hutt:** These three questions are inter-linked hence this combined answer. Mind Cymru's director was a member of the independent advisory group that drew up the draft adult strategy. I was pleased to be able to fund a series of meetings that Mind Cymru organised throughout Wales during the consultation period to discuss the draft. The Mind response is one of over 100 detailed responses received. These are still being logged in and analysed and it would be inappropriate to single out one response for detailed comment at this stage. I can say that I am encouraged by the generally positive tone of Mind's reply and by the constructive nature of the suggestions made.

Both strategies are still in draft form at the moment. Both advisory groups stressed the need for the strategies to be compliant with the law and compatible with other initiatives that are being taken forward. Before drawing up the final strategies, we shall take legal advice on all aspects of the relevant legislative framework.

### Proposed Health Professions Council (Interests of Wales and Principles of Devolution)

**David Melding:** What discussions has Jane Hutt had with the Secretary of State for Health to ensure that the proposed health professions council represents the interests of Wales and the principles of devolution? (WAQ8720)

**Jane Hutt:** A consultation seminar was held in Cardiff on 25 October to allow health professions, employers and other key stakeholders the opportunity to feed their views on the health professions council proposals directly to National Assembly officials.

A response was sent to the Department of Health from the National Assembly for Wales, which was informed by the discussion at the seminar and feedback received in the Assembly from the correspondence consultation.

The response noted that the proposal for the new health professions council provides for a membership of 23—12 registrant and 11 lay members. There is provision for each of the home countries to have at least one lay member to represent their interests.

The proposals as they stand do not guarantee that each UK country will have professional representation on the council. Concern over this omission was included in the response sent from the National Assembly for Wales to the Department of Health. A proposal has been submitted by us to increase the membership of the council to include one registrant representative from each of the UK countries, as a necessary element in delivering accountability in a post-devolution context.

### **‘Manual of Guidance on Voluntary Sector Grants’**

**David Lloyd:** Has Jane Hutt considered revising section 8.8.4 of the ‘Manual of Guidance on Voluntary Sector Grants’, given the burden that the 25 per cent self-funding requirement places on the voluntary sector? (WAQ8721)

**Jane Hutt:** The ‘Manual of Guidance on Voluntary Sector Grants’ predates the National Assembly’s voluntary sector scheme and the strategic review of funding the voluntary sector undertaken on behalf of the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. As part of the scheme, a code of practice on funding the voluntary sector is being produced and will be consulted upon in Spring/Summer 2001. Any changes deemed necessary as a result of the strategic review will be built into the code of practice.

### **NHS Public Appointments**

**David Melding:** Will Jane Hutt make a statement on the ramifications for NHS public appointments of Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust not having a Welsh-speaking member on its board of directors? (WAQ8725)

**Jane Hutt** I can confirm that the Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust does have a board member who is a Welsh speaker. Mr Dewi Williams is the Trust’s Director of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. I refer Mr Melding to my letter of 23 November in response to his letter of 3 November (ref: JH 02660/00) on the same subject.

*A revised answer to the above question was issued on 18 January 2001.*

## **Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs**

### **Fishing Harbour Grants Scheme**

**Alun Cairns:** Will the Minister for Rural Affairs make a statement on the fishing harbour grants scheme and what plans does he have to re-introduce it? (WAQ8709)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Carwyn Jones):** The fishing harbour grants scheme, in Wales, is still open to new applications. The scheme provides grants to public authorities and non-profit-making organisations, for the provision and/or improvement of facilities that are of benefit to the fishing industry, at ports and harbours. Grants are available for works of construction, improvement or repair to a harbour, pier, quay or slipway, and the landward approaches to any of these, or to associated buildings, are also eligible for grant.

The future of the scheme will be reviewed once the new, Objective 1 and non-Objective 1 financial instrument for fisheries guidance, European Union fisheries grant schemes are launched early in the new year. The new schemes will provide support similar to that provided by the harbour grants scheme.

## Questions to the Minister for Environment

### Partington Marine, Pwllheli

**Dafydd Wigley:** Will the Minister for Environment make a statement regarding the delay in responding to the application by Partington Marine, Pwllheli to divert a public footpath; and by when does she now expect the process to be completed? (WAQ8678)

**The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex):** Since the application for the making of a stopping up order was received in September, officials have been in discussion with Partington Marine's solicitors about ways to complete the required supporting documentation. When this is received, arrangements will be made to advertise the proposal. The timescale will depend upon whether objections are received at that time.

### New Briton Ferry Bridge

**Alun Cairns:** Would Sue Essex make a statement on the new Briton Ferry bridge and on whether representation was received from anyone during the construction or planning stage that severe weather and wind would cause problems, leading to closure? (WAQ8679)

**Sue Essex:** No representations were received during the planning or design stage regarding potential problems from adverse weather, which would lead to closure of the new bridge.

During construction, it was perceived by those involved in the construction and those who visited the part-complete structure that the effects of wind were greater than on the adjacent old A48 Briton Ferry bridge, which was at a slightly lower level.

Consideration was therefore given during construction to including wind shielding but was rejected on grounds of cost and effect on the construction programme. The availability of the alternative A48 dual carriageway route and the potential for fitting wind shielding in the future were also taken into account in that decision.

### Extending the European Union's Working Time Directive to Transport Services

**David Melding:** Does the administration support the principle of extending the EU's Working Time Directive to transport services? (WAQ8682)

**Sue Essex:** The Assembly has no direct influence on the Working Time Directive as this is a matter for the UK Government as an EU member state. However, I am not opposed to the extension of working time legislation in principle.

### Extending HSE Jurisdiction to Transport Services

**David Melding:** Will the administration support the principle of extending Health and Safety Executive jurisdiction to transport services? (WAQ8683)

**Sue Essex:** This is not a devolved matter. The Health and Safety Executive is responsible for health and safety policy covering the duties of all types of employers for their employees, including transport operators.

The Health and Safety Executive also includes Her Majesty's Rail Inspectorate, which conducts investigations as they relate to safety on the railways. Responsibility for safety enforcement for ships and

their crews rests with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The HSE has an interest in the safety aspects of new harbour by-laws and in the health and safety of workers, whether loading or unloading from berthed ships or the dock side.

## **Questions to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities**

### **Overpayment in Housing Benefit (Representations)**

**Peter Rogers:** What is the nature of the representations that the Minister for Finance has received concerning the identification of a possible overpayment of £2.4 million in housing benefit by the Isle of Anglesey County Council? (WAQ8686)

**The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart):** I have received no representations on this matter.

### **Overspend in Housing Benefit (Action)**

**Peter Rogers:** What action has Edwina Hart taken as a result of the identification of a £2.4 million possible overspend in housing benefit by the Isle of Anglesey County Council, as established by the council's district auditor? (WAQ8687)

**Edwina Hart:** I have taken no action. The Department of Social Security is responsible for any action taken in response to the identification of this possible overspend.

### **Regulation of Publications by District Auditors**

**Peter Rogers:** Can Edwina Hart make a statement on her input into the regulation of the required content of publications made by district auditors in Wales? (WAQ8688)

**Edwina Hart:** I have no input into the content of publications made by district auditors in Wales. The district audit service is an independent body.

### **Communities First Funds**

**Janet Ryder:** Will communities that are eligible for Communities First funds be able to access those funds without the support of their local authority? (WAQ8713)

**Edwina Hart:** The consultation paper that sets out our proposals for implementing Communities First was launched on 6 December. We are proposing that funding, through specific grant, should be made to the local authority, on the basis of communities' annual delivery programmes. Local authorities will have the accounting responsibility for the funds, but freedom will need to be given to the individual partnerships to undertake day-to-day delivery in accordance with the agreed plan that sets out partnerships' and communities' priorities. Communities will, therefore, be able to access this funding, but in partnership with the local authority and other partners, not independently from them.