

Written Questions answered between 28 September and 5 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

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how the Welsh Assembly Government is taking advantage of sporting events to be staged in Wales to promote cross-cutting policy issues? (WAQ47806)

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): The Welsh Assembly Government supports a wide range of sporting events that provide a number of cross-cutting benefits: from promoting Wales to the world, increasing participation in physical activity, promoting Wales as a place to visit and promoting Wales as a high-class events destination and a place to do business. Our strategic approach to supporting events is based upon maximising the return on our investment across a diverse range of policy portfolios.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of the Welsh film industry? (WAQ47808) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks.*

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): I have taken this question because the matter falls within my portfolio in respect of the creative industries strategy.

Increasingly, our creative industries strategy is having a positive impact on the creative industries in Wales and I am confident of a good future for the industry. Last year, filming in Wales contributed over £18 million to the economy. In addition, we have a thriving television industry with the *Dr Who* and *Torchwood* series, the BBC's new drama complex at Treforest and the work being done by S4C and ITV, demonstrating a commitment to success in Wales.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding available for sportsmen and women who represent Wales in major events? (WAQ47817)

Alun Pugh: The Elite Cymru scheme and the world-class performance programme provide funding to elite Welsh athletes to take part in performance programmes in preparation for major competitions. The Welsh Assembly Government contributed £150,000 towards the cost of the Welsh team that took part in this year's Commonwealth Games in Australia.

The Assembly Government's financial support for major sporting events also provides a good opportunity for our elite athletes and sportspeople to compete on the world stage.

Laura Anne Jones: How is the Minister encouraging more people to volunteer as sports coaches in Wales? (WAQ47818)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government is investing £3.9 million in the coaching plan for Wales to increase the number of voluntary and professional coaches, leaders and instructors in Wales and to improve the quality of coaching through education and training. The coaching plan for Wales will also create a community based infrastructure of coaches and leaders to deliver more opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the uptake of free swimming for children during the school summer holidays? (WAQ47819)

Alun Pugh: The full impact of the national free swimming pilot initiative will be presented in a final evaluation report in June 2007. The Welsh Assembly Government's £2.5 million investment in free swimming for young people continues to have a positive impact on swimming participation levels across

Wales. On average, there is an increase of 30,000 in junior swims per week during the summer holiday period (from an average of 65,000 in 2002 to an average of 95,000 in 2005).

William Graham: Will the Minister outline discussions on staging future football cup finals at the Millennium Stadium? (WAQ47820)

Alun Pugh: We have regular discussions with the Millennium Stadium about a wide range of events. The FA Cup final and many other important finals will return to Wembley as soon as construction work is complete.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on the benefit of sport to a healthy lifestyle? (WAQ47821)

Alun Pugh: Our policies setting out the benefits of sport and physical activity on healthy lifestyles are contained in the 'Climbing Higher: Next Steps' document. This is a major response to health challenge Wales and sets out our framework for action and key areas for investment so we become a healthier, fitter Wales and a competitive force on the world stage.

Jonathan Morgan: What discussions has the Minister had with the representatives of Cardiff County Council over the completion of a temporary ice rink for the capital city of Wales? (WAQ47822)

Alun Pugh: I have had no specific discussions with Cardiff council regarding the provision of a temporary ice rink in Cardiff.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on provision for art exhibitions beyond Cardiff? (WAQ47823)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding to develop a network of venues to ensure that art exhibitions can reach audiences across Wales. New centres like the Riverfront, Newport, Galeri in Caernarfon, the gallery space in the WMC, and the refurbished Mwdan Arts Centre complement our existing provision of excellent galleries across Wales. Our investment in these new venues will offer more opportunities for artists to exhibit and market their work.

ArtShare

In December 2004 I launched the Celf Cymru Gyfan—ArtShare Wales visual arts partnership programme. To date various exhibitions have been held as part of a programme developed to show items from the national collections at a network of regional galleries. It demonstrates the commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Museum to display our national treasures in all parts of Wales.

The five regional galleries are:

- Bodelwyddan Castle, Denbighshire;
- Oriel Mostyn, Llandudno;
- Ruthin Craft Centre;
- Oriel Davies, Newtown; and
- Glynn Vivian Art Gallery Swansea.

I was pleased to announce a £2.6 million capital lottery award for Oriel Mostyn at the Urdd Eisteddfod in June. Oriel Mostyn has well and truly established itself on the map in terms of contemporary arts, and is one of a growing number of exciting cultural venues emerging all over Wales. This lottery award is an exciting new development for the people of Llandudno and north Wales and for the arts in Wales.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on his portfolio responsibilities for film in Wales? (WAQ47824)

Alun Pugh: My portfolio responsibilities for film lies in cultural filmmaking and the preservation of Wales's film heritage.

Funding is mainly channelled through the Arts Council of Wales, who provided a total of £1,800,000 to a variety of film-related projects, including film productions, development and individual screen writers in 2005-06. To date, the arts council has provided £600,000 for similar projects in 2006-07.

The Arts Council of Wales provided funding for Sgrîn in the past and is now the largest funding partner of the newly established film agency for Wales (£300,000 in 2006-07). The film agency has a specific remit to encourage the development of the art, industry and business of film in Wales. The agency is led by individuals with direct industry experience, which it is hoped will contribute to increased professionalism in the sector in Wales. It also has overall responsibility for the Cardiff film festival and works with independent cinema venues throughout Wales to promote film exhibition and education.

Through the National Library of Wales I fund the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, which aims to collect and preserve Wales's audio-visual heritage.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the implementation of the Welsh Language Act 1993 in Wales? (WAQ47828)

Alun Pugh: Currently, responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Welsh Language Act falls mainly to the Welsh Language Board. This includes ensuring that bodies covered by the Act prepare and implement Welsh language schemes which set out how they will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality in providing services to the public in Wales. It also involves monitoring the performance of those bodies in implementing their schemes. The additional £16 million allocated to the board between 2003 and 2006 has enabled it to step up its work on language schemes. The fact that 371 Welsh language schemes have been approved by the board shows the advances that have been made since the passing of the Act.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on public access to the arts in Wales? (WAQ47829)

Alun Pugh: Wales has an excellent network of galleries like the Riverfront, Newport, and world-class venues like the WMC and Galeri in Caernarfon. Initiatives such as the arts outside Cardiff have helped to ensure that people across Wales, particularly in Communities First areas, have been able to take part in and enjoy arts events, such as Clywd Theatr Cymru's mobile theatre tours. Community access to the arts is also greatly enhanced by the Arts Council of Wales's night out scheme.

The Welsh Assembly Government's policy of free entry to National Museum Wales was introduced in April 2001. All Welsh people, and visitors to Wales, now have the opportunity to appreciate, enjoy and learn from our national collections held at seven sites throughout Wales.

From the beginning, the policy has been a resounding success with greatly increased visitor numbers. Figures for 2004-05 show an increase of 77 per cent over the last year of charging.

Wales's tradition of festivals, such as the National Eisteddfod, Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod, Brecon Jazz, Faenol and the Hay literary festival, provide an excellent opportunity for the public to access

the arts. This tradition has been enhanced in recent years to include a growing number of local festivals that are gaining status, such as the Big Cheese in Caerphilly and the Green Man festival in Brecon.

The Welsh Assembly Government is currently reviewing its culture strategy, which will include consideration of how we can best provide access to the arts. There continue to be real barriers to access to the arts in some communities in Wales, and there is a need to reform for the future in order to ensure that we continue as a country to develop excellent art, with access for all.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in developing sport in Wales? (WAQ47830)

Alun Pugh: In order to take forward our 'Climbing Higher' strategy I have outlined a range of initiatives for developing sport in Wales in our 'Climbing Higher: Next Steps' document which I launched on 26 July 2006. This provides the vision and sets out the framework for action and key areas for investment to 2008-09 to enable us to achieve our long term aim of making Wales a healthier nation and a competitive force on the world stage.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for his portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and Assembly sponsored public bodies, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47893) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer I gave to WAQ47898.

Questions to the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks

Owen John Thomas: What steps has the Minister taken to persuade the Westminster Government to increase its financial assistance scheme so as to ensure full pension entitlements for all members of the Allied Steel and Wire pension trust? (WAQ47812)

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): Since 2002 both the First Minister and I have regularly raised the plight of the ASW pension scheme members with UK Government Ministers, including past and present Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions.

As a Government we continue to work closely with the Community Union and its elected ASW campaign committee to secure the reinstatement of full pension rights for all ASW pension scheme members and the First Minister is in regular discussion with the union's general secretary on this issue.

This course of action may have been a factor in the UK Government's announcement on 25 May of substantial additional funding of some £1.7 billion for the financial assistance scheme, and the extension of financial support for those up to 15 years from retirement age as at 14 May 2004.

Although the announcement was a major step forward, and many more former ASW workers are now able to benefit from the financial assistance scheme, there are many others who remain ineligible for support, including those who have paid into the pension scheme for up to 30 years, but were more than 15 years from retirement.

The Assembly Government is committed to getting the best possible deal for former ASW staff. The next phase of action will begin next month when the implications of the ongoing legal case have been assessed by all parties.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the importance of rail as part of developing a sustainable transport system in Wales? (WAQ47813)

Andrew Davies: Rail travel is a small component of overall travel in Wales. However, it has a key role in implementing our integrated transport policy and accounts for almost 20 million journeys per year. The Assembly Government is currently undertaking a planning assessment of rail services and infrastructure in Wales. Rail, together with other means of enabling passenger and freight movements, plays an important part in the development of a sustainable transport system.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the closure of the LG Electronics plant in Newport? (WAQ47815)

Andrew Davies: On 18 August, LG announced to its workforce that it would close its electronics plant in Newport by the end of the year. The company, which assembles computer monitors, blamed falling prices and rising production costs for the closure.

As you are aware, the then Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency and training organisations paid a total of £131 million to support the LG projects. Of the £131 million actually paid out—largely by the Conservative-led Welsh Office and the former WDA—the Assembly Government has recovered £28 million in cash and has taken back land and buildings.

The important factor now is to ensure that the workers affected by this decision are assisted in finding new employment. My department has an excellent track record of dealing with such announcements and will do everything possible to ensure that the workers are supported.

Owen John Thomas: What consultation has taken place between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Stationery Office in Cardiff regarding job losses following its recent closure? (WAQ47880)

Andrew Davies: The TSO advises us that it recently decided to close its Cardiff shop with the loss of five jobs. However, the TSO legislation publishing service, which employs one person, is unaffected.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for his portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47895) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of Visteon? (WAQ47915)

Andrew Davies: The recent press articles on a possible sale of the Visteon facility in Swansea are based on speculation and not hard facts. My officials are in constant discussions with the management and will do everything possible to ensure that the factory stays open.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on job losses in the Neath and Port Talbot area? (WAQ47916)

Andrew Davies: Regrettably the Neath and Port Talbot area has suffered significant job losses. Through the Team Wales approach, the Welsh Assembly Government is working closely with Jobcentre Plus,

Careers Wales and other key partners, to provide support to workers affected by the redundancies. In particular, Jobcentre Plus offers a range of support to help people to re-enter work quickly, or to access training opportunities.

We are working with many companies on job creation projects within the area.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the employment situation in South Wales West? (WAQ47918)

Andrew Davies: The employment rate in South Wales West in the year ending March 2006 was 68.6 per cent of the working-age population, a rise of 0.5 percentage points over 2001. The figure for Wales for the year ending March 2006 was 71 per cent. We are continuing to maintain unemployment at historically low levels and to reduce economic inactivity.

Owen John Thomas: What steps has the Minister taken recently to persuade the Westminster Government to increase the financial assistance scheme so as to ensure full pension entitlements for all members of the ASW pension trust? (WAQ47920)

Andrew Davies: I refer you to the answer I gave to your previous question of 25 September.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the economic development of Torfaen? (WAQ47922)

Andrew Davies: 'Wales: A Vibrant Economy' sets out the Assembly Government's agenda for economic development across Wales with priorities to increase employment further and to raise the quality of jobs. As part of this agenda the Assembly Government will continue to work with Torfaen County Borough Council to take forward the regeneration strategy for Torfaen and to secure additional benefits for the area from the Heads of the Valleys Programme. Examples include our support for the recently completed Springboard Innovation Centre at Llantarnam Park, Cwmbran, and the World Heritage Centre in Blaenavon, which is currently under construction and due for completion in 2007.

In addition, 62 offers of regional selective assistance worth over £37 million have been made in Torfaen since the inception of the Assembly. These projects are expected to lever in some £131 million in capital expenditure, create almost 3,700 jobs and safeguard a further 1,137 jobs. 82 Assembly investment grant offers have also been made in Torfaen worth over £2.5 million. These projects are expected to lever in some £7 million in capital expenditure, create 280 jobs and safeguard a further 720 jobs.

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister reaffirm the Welsh Assembly Government's proposed £7.5 million investment in the Penarth headland link? (WAQ47942)

Andrew Davies: The Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council has informed me that in light of escalating costs the construction of the Penarth headland link has been postponed, and that the council is investigating alternative options to the existing scheme within the funding available. I look forward to receiving further information from the council on its intended approach, at which point I will be able to take a decision on the grant that was made available for the original scheme.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on what action he is taking to promote innovation in Wales? (WAQ47944)

Andrew Davies: Key actions to promote innovation are through the innovation section of our economic development strategy, 'WAVE' and the innovation action plan and include:

- a range of innovation support to businesses including financial support to invest in research and development (SMART Cymru), support and finance for academic institutions through the knowledge exploitation fund; and
- a number of activities to raise awareness of the importance of innovation to businesses, individuals and academia, including an InnovationWorks e-newsletter containing information and ideas to increase innovation and up to date information events and activities. To subscribe to the e-newsletter e-mail InnovationWorks@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Ann Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with the Department for Work and Pensions on making the most effective use of cities strategy pathfinder status in Rhyl? (WAQ47949) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.*

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson): This issue is the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions and has not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. However, my officials are working closely with DWP in providing joint support to the cities strategy pathfinder area of Rhyl, as well as being represented on the Rhyl cities strategy steering group. In addition, through the Skills, Business and Employability Division, the Assembly Government is represented on DWP's cities strategy project board, set up to oversee the development of the pathfinder projects.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the Assembly Government's role in ensuring the most effective use of cities strategy pathfinder status for Rhyl? (WAQ47950) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.*

Jane Davidson: This issue is the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions and has not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government.

However, the aim of the cities strategy is to provide support to people, particularly those in disadvantaged groups, such as incapacity benefit claimants and people from minority ethnic groups, to help them find work, as well as to improve their skills so that they can progress once in employment. This accords with the key aims of the Assembly Government, and my officials are working closely with DWP in providing joint support to the cities strategy pathfinder area of Rhyl, as well as being represented on the Rhyl cities strategy steering group. In addition, through the Skills, Business and Employability Division, the Assembly Government is represented on DWP's cities strategy project board, set up to oversee the development of the pathfinder projects.

Mick Bates: When will the Buttington to Middletown road improvement be finished? (WAQ47971)

Andrew Davies: This scheme is in phase 3 of the trunk road forward programme and is unlikely to start before April 2010. Once started construction will take about 30 months to complete. Officials are still in discussion with the Department for Transport about funding and the preferred route announcement.

Questions to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Carl Sargeant: How is the Welsh Assembly Government meeting its objective of tackling poverty of educational opportunity where it exists? (WAQ47861)

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson): The education, lifelong learning and skills policies focus on tackling disadvantage, reducing gaps in performance, tackling poverty of educational opportunity and striving for excellence. Our key strategies and objectives are set out in Wales A Better Country and The Learning Country and include:

Early Years

The foundation phase for children from three to seven years will provide all young children with a developmentally appropriate curriculum which will cater for their needs, provide them with a flying start in life and help them and their families to set high aspirations for future academic and social success. It is a curriculum that builds on what children can do and what they bring to the learning environment.

The long-term aim of the foundation phase is to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. Far too many young children enter education unable to talk about their feelings and experiences. These children are not motivated to read and write and see little value in these activities. Putting undue pressure can lead to children experiencing failure, a loss of confidence and self esteem which can lead to disaffection and truancy.

Community-focused Schools

Schools can play an important part in helping to build strong and active communities in which people of all races and backgrounds are valued. Communities vary, but it is likely that community-focused school activities are services which will be of particular value in rural and disadvantaged areas. Local schools may be able to work together in clusters, with each school developing different activities and services. This will enable all pupils, families and communities to access a wide range of service across several locations.

Cymorth/Flying Start

Further initiatives include Cymorth—the Children and Youth Support Fund, Communities First and the Flying Start programme, with delivery of services to begin in January 2007.

Through Cymorth we are able to reach many disadvantaged children, young people and their families across Wales through around 1,000 individual projects. These projects are doing excellent work and are highly valued by families.

Flying Start is targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, recognising the evidence that children within areas of multiple deprivation suffer additional effects of disadvantage. Proposed interventions include free, good quality childcare, additional health visiting, and parenting programmes that support improved outcomes for children in the long term. The proposals are targeted at a limited number of school catchment areas in order to invest intensely. The programme may be widened in future years in the light of evaluation. Flying Start treats all children and their parents as equal, and they must feel included regardless of race, gender, culture, religion, disability or lifestyle.

Raising Achievement and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE)

The RAISE programme is intended to target the link between deprivation and attainment and to enhance the educational expectations and attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all ages.

The programme has three key elements:

1. £14.6 million is being distributed to target schools to fund focused projects and initiatives aimed at supporting pupils who are disadvantaged or most at risk of low attainment—or leaving full time education with no qualifications;
2. £1 million is being distributed to local authorities to enable them to better support the learning of looked-after children;
3. The balance will fund a team of school improvement professionals to work with LEAs and schools identifying and sharing best practice and building a sound evidence base on which to base future policy direction and external evaluation.

Better Schools Fund

The Better Schools fund provides grant to local education authorities in order to support innovation and the development and sharing of good practice in schools. Priority areas being supported during 2006-07 include: effective transition, basic skills, improving school attendance and behaviour, child protection, additional learning needs and inclusion and the effective use of information and communications technology in schools. The programme for 2006-07 is worth £39.333 million, including match funding contributions from local education authorities. Grant is distributed to authorities on the basis of an allocation formula which includes weightings for social deprivation (based on the child deprivation index) in five out of the six key activity areas.

School Uniforms

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that some parents face financial difficulty in purchasing school uniform for their children. To help tackle this, the Assembly Government introduced an all-Wales school uniform grant scheme in 2005-06 to assist families on low incomes with the costs of school uniform purchase. The grant of £95 (increased from £85 in 2005-06) is again available in 2006-07 for pupils entering Year 7 of secondary school in September 2006 who are eligible for free school meals, and for pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units who are aged 11 at the start of the 2006-07 school year and who are eligible for free school meals. The scheme is administered on the Assembly Government's behalf by local education authorities and applications for grant should be made to them.

Inclusion

The Welsh Assembly Government has a suite of initiatives to promote the education of groups of pupils who may have greater difficulties in accessing or maintaining engagement in mainstream. These include the ethnic minority achievement grant, the development of improved ways of supporting pupils with special educational needs, including reviewing the statementing process; the promotion of effective ways of tackling bullying; the setting-up of a stakeholder group to develop specific actions to improve the educational attainment of looked after children and increase the numbers moving on to further and higher education and training supported by the RAISE grant of £1 million for 2006-07 and 2007-08. Inclusion and pupil support guidance due to be published in November 2006 will set out for schools and local education authorities' duties in promoting inclusion, including promoting positive behaviour and high levels of attendance and supporting any pupils who have additional learning needs.

Breakfasts

School meals and the provision of free school meals in particular are an important aspect of the Welsh Assembly Government's antipoverty strategy. In deprived areas, where the majority of meals are free, these set the quality for the whole service. Unique to Wales is our primary school free breakfast initiative, giving schools the opportunity to offer their pupils a free healthy breakfast at school each day and in doing so allowing all those that for whatever reason have not had breakfast to have one in school. We recognise that a good diet is important both to school performance and health and are determined to help secure, maintain and improve the health of our children and young people by taking a whole-school approach to food and nutrition. 'Appetite for Life', which was launched for public consultation on 29 June, includes 41 proposals on how we can continue to improve the food on offer in our schools; the consultation period ends on 31 October 2006.

Reaching Higher—widening access

Widening access is a key priority in 'Reaching Higher'. An additional £14 million has been provided for the sector this financial year to support 'Reaching Higher', and a portion of that additional funding will be used specifically to support widening access activities.

The 'Reaching Wider' strategy is Wales-wide, and aims to widen access into higher education for those people in Wales who would not normally consider doing so.

There are four regional partnerships covering the whole of Wales. Each partnership provides a wide range of activities designed to help and support those with the potential to access a higher education. Activities include student mentoring, summer universities and 'tastes of university life' workshops.

As well as these activities, the partnerships organise activities designed to promote the higher education options in their regions, working with regional schools, universities and colleges to help widen access to higher education.

Student awards—Assembly Learning Grants, Educational Maintenance Allowances, Financial Contingency Funds etc

Having taken responsibility for all aspects of student financial support in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government is able to target financial assistance at the least-well-off students in schools, further and higher education. A range of means-tested support and incentive payments are available ranging from the education maintenance allowance for 16 to 18-year-old students to the special support grant for HE students who are in receipt of State Benefits, all aimed at removing financial obstacles to learning.

Youth Work Delivery

The Welsh Assembly Government provides a range of services, resources and training for those supporting the personal, social and educational development of young people in Wales, in non-formal educational settings. This includes the accreditation of young people's experiences obtained within both the voluntary and statutory youth services, for instance OCN certification for activities undertaken and community involvement; using youth work recognition like the Duke of Edinburgh Award within more formal educational opportunities such as the Welsh Baccalaureate, and also seeking to re-engage disaffected young people into the formal educational setting through youth access programmes. To achieve this, the Assembly is supporting a programme of training for youth workers, youth support workers and others working with young people to enhance their skills, knowledge and effectiveness.

The Welsh Assembly Government is currently developing a youth service strategy, in consultation with service providers and young people, which will set out its vision for the youth service in Wales. The strategy will identify the staff, structures and resources required to meet the needs of the vision and devise an action plan to take this forward. The Assembly is also facilitating a review of the youth work curriculum statement for Wales, which lays down guidelines and underpinning values for youth work practice in Wales.

Young Offenders' Learning Project

The young offenders' learning project is the second Assembly Government initiative addressing learning, education and training issues in relation to young people within the criminal justice system. The main aim to improve the education and training provision, in particular, is the quality and variety of learning opportunities available for all young people aged 11 to 25 in and from Wales, who are known to youth offending teams or otherwise clients of the criminal justice system. The project leader works closely with the new national offender management service in Wales in relation to the 18 plus range of young people. This should help in the long term smooth the transition phase from the age of 17 and influence/support their remit on education, training and employment issues.

Extending Entitlement

Extending Entitlement is a flagship policy of the Welsh Assembly Government and was made in Wales to reflect the needs of young people in Wales. This policy is innovative for this reason but also because of its cross cutting nature as a result of its entitlement based approach to the provision of universal support and services for young people.

Extending Entitlement has attracted widespread attention from its inception in 2001—from the rest of the UK and from across Europe. It has the potential to make a very significant contribution to the development of both the European youth agenda and to the wider Lisbon agenda dealing with employment and skills for young people throughout the European Union.

Extending Entitlement aims, through the 10 entitlements, to promote opportunity and choice for young people, to help them to make informed decisions in their lives, to help them to achieve their potential and to reach for their dreams.

Central to Extending Entitlement is the idea that young people should be able to access their entitlements, wherever they are in Wales, in a form that is easy for them to use.

Participation Project

The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to promote the importance of partnership working in relation to children and young people's participation. We have funded a participation unit and consortium which are facilitated by Save the Children Cymru. The consortium is made up of representatives from a number of statutory and voluntary children and young people's organisations and agencies as well as the Welsh Assembly Government, and is working to share ideas and good practice in participation as well as to support a co-ordinated approach within Wales.

14-19 Learning Pathways

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 each individual 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;
- recognise the support, which will vary over time, which learners need to overcome barriers to learning and the means for each learner to access a unique blend of support to meet their individual needs.

Basic skills strategy

A lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills presents a barrier to educational achievement, employment, access to health provision and the ability to manage one's business and financial affairs. It is also a factor in offender behaviour. The second national basic skills strategy for Wales, 'Words Talk—Numbers Count' is being implemented by the Assembly in partnership with the Basic Skills Agency and builds on the foundations of the first. £40 million is being invested in the five-year strategy. It comprises a unique, all-age approach which aims to embed interventions into mainstream learning provision.

Initiatives are increasingly being focused on the areas of greatest need. For example, an expanded language and play programme (to stimulate early language development) together with a new number and play programme (to stimulate numeracy skills) will target Communities First areas.

Workforce Development

We have developed a flexible package of support for developing the skills of those in the workplace through the workforce development programme. This includes an upfront analysis of training needs, including basic skills, the development of training plan and a contribution towards the cost of the implementing the plan.

Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF)

The Wales union learning fund was launched in April 1999. Since inception WULF has provided over £4.6 million to fund 104 projects across Wales. Two of the main aims of WULF are:

1. to raise the skills of the workforce;
2. to increase the take-up of learning by non-traditional learners.

Learning Community Account Pilots:

Learning community account pilots are identifying new ways of delivering learning within communities which meet the identified needs of those communities. The LCA is intended to provide innovative support for the learning needs of specific communities or groups within communities. The key element of the programme is community empowerment to enable communities to identify need, plan the response and deliver the learning largely through their control of the process.

Currently there are five pilot projects responding to a range of community-based learning issues such as the needs (nationally) of young homeless, the specific needs of disengaged young people (Neath Port Talbot) and supporting learners with mental health difficulties (Caia Park, Wrexham), as well as issues of social exclusion associated with deprived communities (Treherbert, Rhondda Cynon Taf).

A total of £308,000 was allocated to the first year and this year £670,000 has been set aside to extend the pilots and test the applicability of the approach to other segments of disenfranchised community learners such as black and ethnic minority groups, migrants and Gypsy/Travellers and further socially deprived communities.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the 2006 GCSE results in Wales? (WAQ47862)

Jane Davidson: Our GCSE and Welsh baccalaureate intermediate students are to be congratulated on their wonderful results and they have every reason to celebrate.

With the support of teachers and parents our students have once again proved Wales to be a truly learning country. Not only have we improved on our previous best performances but our GCSE results in Wales again compare well with England and Northern Ireland, with whom we share the national qualifications framework.

I am particularly pleased that the overall pass rate for GCSE at grades A* to G, the percentage achieving A* to C and A* to A are all up on last year. The results for the Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma were also impressive—63 per cent of the candidates achieved the full Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma and 78 per cent of them successfully completed the intermediate core certificate.

Pass rates for GCSE English and mathematics have continued to improve as has performance in each of the individual sciences and the science double award.

The changes we are making mean that students in Wales are increasingly able to choose learning pathways that suit their interests, learning styles and abilities but that also ensure they are ready for continued learning, be that at school, college or the workplace. Our focus on skills in Wales is already paying dividends as shown by the fact that 16 per cent of key skills awards are being made to students in Wales.

The growing popularity of the Welsh baccalaureate is being reinforced from this month when the pilot extends to include intermediate and foundation levels in key stage 4, marking another important step towards the 14-19 Learning Pathways that we are developing. The current post-16 intermediate level students have managed to complete a huge amount in a short time. Many have followed the Welsh baccalaureate programme for just one year and can be very proud of what they have achieved.

These results are only the start and I hope that students will use them to go on to further education, higher education, training and employment to help ensure that Wales is a prosperous and successful learning country—and secure their own personal fulfilment too.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the cost of school uniforms? (WAQ47863)

Jane Davidson: There is no specific legislation covering school uniform. Governing bodies are able to decide whether their school has a school uniform policy and what that policy consists of. However I expect governing bodies to consult all parents when introducing or changing its school uniform policy and to fully consider the cost of the uniform and its affordability to parents.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that some parents face financial difficulty in purchasing school uniform for their children. This has a particular impact when pupils move from primary to secondary school. This is why I introduced an all-Wales school uniform grant scheme in 2005-06 to assist families on low incomes with the purchase of school uniform.

The Welsh Assembly Government school uniform grant scheme is again available in 2006-07. Funding of £750,000 has been allocated to provide a grant of £95 (increased from £85 in 2005-06) for pupils entering Year 7 of secondary school in September 2006 who are eligible for free school meals, and for pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units who are aged 11 at the start of the 2006-07 school year and who are eligible for free school meals.

Local education authorities are administering the grant on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government and applications for grant should be directly to LEAs.

In addition to the Assembly Government scheme, 13 LEAs in Wales also provide their own financial assistance to families for the purchase of school uniform. These grants are discretionary and it is up to individual LEAs to decide the amount of financial assistance and the eligibility criteria.

Eleanor Burnham: How many schools have suffered arson attacks in the last three years and will the Minister make a statement on this? (WAQ47864)

Jane Davidson: Information on arson attacks on schools in Wales provided by the fire service authorities is as follows.

In the last three years between 2003-04 and 2005-06 inclusive, 127 schools have suffered arson attacks in the areas indicated below:

South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority area suffered 53;

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority area suffered 31;

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority area suffered 43.

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.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on her target for making all school buildings fit for purpose by 2010? (WAQ47865)

Jane Davidson: As I reported to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee in July, authorities are making considerable progress in bringing school buildings up to a fit-for-purpose condition. We are exceeding our manifesto commitment of investing £560 million to improve school buildings during the lifetime of this Assembly. The total of investment supported by the Assembly

Government in the period 2004-05 to 2007-08 is £629.372 million (including the capital value of private finance initiative schemes).

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her current priorities for education in Wales? (WAQ47867)

Jane Davidson: My priorities are to meet commitments in ‘Wales: a Better Country’ and ‘The Learning Country’: putting learners’ interests first, overcoming barriers to learning, promoting equal opportunities, high expectations and standards. Current priorities, as outlined in the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills’s operational plan

(<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearnskills/content/agendas-e.htm>)

at the beginning of the financial year. These include:

Top up fees—(‘Wales: a Better Country’ commitment)

From 2006-07, student support services are devolved to the Assembly. ‘Student Finance Wales’ provides grants and loans to students in partnership with the Student Loans Company and local authorities.

In line with our manifesto commitment, variable fees have not been introduced in Wales during the current Assembly term but the Assembly is committed to ensuring that higher education institutions in Wales do not suffer as a consequence of this.

School Breakfasts—(‘Wales: a Better Country’ commitment)

There are approximately 1,600 eligible primary schools in Wales. The initiative is optional for both schools and pupils attending participating schools. There are many benefits to participating in the initiative such as improving concentration levels and children’s attitude to learning and providing children with a good start to the school day.

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 186 schools are scheduled to begin participating during this autumn term.

Invest £560 million to improve school buildings—(‘Wales: a Better Country’ commitment)

Investment for better schools involves a significant increase in funding for school buildings to £143 million per annum from 2005-06 onwards. In addition, there is early years capital investment of £8,406,000 in 2006-07 towards the establishment of integrated centres and early years provision.

Flying Start

Flying Start will be targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, recognising the evidence that children within areas of multiple deprivation suffer additional effects of disadvantage.

It will be based on international evidence of the interventions that support improved outcomes for children in the long term. Proposed interventions include free, good quality childcare, additional health visiting, and parenting programmes.

The proposals are targeted at a limited number of school catchment areas in order to invest intensely.

Foundation Phase

The foundation phase is currently being piloted in 42 schools/settings—the pilot started in September 2004 and will continue until the statutory rollout starts in September 2008. The pilot is therefore in its third year and covers the full, three to seven, age range of the foundation phase.

We are undertaking a full evaluation of the pilot and the monitoring and evaluation report on the first three years will be published in early December alongside an action plan that will set out how we will prepare for the national roll-out.

Integrated Centres

As at June 2006, 38 centres have opened: a further two are scheduled for early 2007 and the final late 2007/early 2008.

Such centres bring together, as a minimum, early years education, childcare, training and open-access play. They might also include a range of other services, such as family support and health. The precise model depends on an assessment of local need.

Community-focused schools

We identified £3 million in 2005-06 and increased this to £3.6 million from 2006-07 for the development of community-focused schools—£2 million of which is linked to helping build safer communities. We are looking to fund exemplar schemes that can either be used as models of good practice elsewhere or which will lead to further development. The agenda for community focused schools is long term. A growing number of schools are well on the way, others are just beginning. Many LEAs are working closely with schools to develop a community focus. Increasingly capital investment in school buildings is directed at dual school and community use.

The case for a much closer relationship between schools and the communities they serve is reinforced by the findings of the narrowing the gap in the performance of schools work, which shows that a community focus can raise the status of learning and help to drive change.

Raising Achievement and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE)

The RAISE programme is intended to target the link between deprivation and attainment and to enhance the educational expectations and attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all ages.

The programme has three key elements:

4. £14.6 million is being distributed to target schools to fund focused projects and initiatives aimed at supporting pupils who are disadvantaged or most at risk of low attainment—or leaving full-time education with no qualifications;
5. £1 million is being distributed to local authorities to enable them to better support the learning of looked-after children;
6. The balance will fund a team of school improvement professionals to work with LEAs and schools identifying and sharing best practice and building a sound evidence base on which to base future policy direction and external evaluation.

‘Iaith Pawb’

We will continue to take forward a wide range of measures in support of Welsh under the ‘Iaith Pawb’ banner—for example:

- training for 590 early years practitioners through the medium of Welsh, more than four times the number originally envisaged;
- new single education plan requirements through which LEAs have to report on demand for Welsh-medium places, for which we have provided a sample survey;
- since April 2003 play has formed part of Cymorth—the Children and Youth Support Fund. One of the key themes within Cymorth is ‘play, leisure and enrichment’. Through play we have been able to assist in the training of staff and volunteer in play skills and activities; in the provision of mobile play provision in isolated areas in rural Wales or housing estates; and in the provision of play activities at weekends, half-term and school holidays;
- the Cymorth guidance stipulates that services for Cymorth should also take full account of the Assembly Government’s commitment to building a bilingual nation through ‘Iaith Pawb’. Cymorth plans that do not show a commitment are referred back to the authority. It is important that the linguistic needs of a community are met;

- increased funding for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and *athrawon bro* through the Welsh Language Board. Through the contract with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Cam wrth Gam) to date, 201 Level 3 and 92 Level 2 have undertaken the relevant training, additionally a contract with Trinity College (Geiriau Bach) has provided level 4 training for 148 practitioners. The Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin's Welsh language centre in Cardiff which provides linguistic support for parents and practitioners over the whole of the South East Wales region and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin's new Welsh-medium integrated centre in Aberystwyth are just two examples;
- immersion pilot projects in which a number of models are being trialled as a means of enabling pupils to move from the English-medium sector to the Welsh-medium sector;
- a specific review of the issues surrounding planning for Welsh-medium ITT provision to be carried out in 2006-07;
- a commissioning programme for high-quality classroom materials has been established since 1994, and since the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales's merger with the Assembly Government. These materials address the needs of subjects across the curriculum, for the whole of the three to 19 age range, and for pupils of all abilities;
- a £2 million Welsh language sabbaticals scheme for practitioners wishing to teach, lecture or train through the medium of Welsh or bilingually;
- a significant increase in the numbers of qualifications available in Welsh;
- six dedicated Welsh for adults centres would be located at University of Wales Bangor, Cardiff University, University of Wales Aberystwyth, University of Wales Swansea, University of Glamorgan and Coleg Gwent;
- increasing numbers of HE students are receiving teaching through the medium of Welsh and there is evidence of a wider range of subjects being offered to students through Welsh. I have taken forward the work done by Andrew Green's steering group to date with additional funding of some £4 million tackling this agenda on both supply and demand. An independent study on the options for future delivery of Welsh-medium HE has been undertaken and I expect to receive advice on that by the end of the year.

The Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 gives effect to the Welsh Assembly Government's policy document 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action', which sets out our proposals for Wales and our commitment to utilise the Act to develop more effective services for children in Wales. It provides for statutory co-operation between local authorities and their partners to improve the well-being of children and young people, on which I take the lead, and the establishment of local safeguarding children boards as part of the portfolio of the Minister for Health and Social Services. In addition it has provided for the transfer of the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Services functions to the National Assembly for Wales under the portfolio of the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.

The Childcare Act 2006

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of parents in their area. In doing so, the Act specifically requires local authorities in Wales to have regard to the needs of parents in the area for the provision of childcare involving the use of the Welsh language. I have set up a task and finish group to consider the demand and challenges for Welsh medium childcare, especially in areas where Welsh speakers are a minority. The recommendations will be taken into account in reviewing Cymorth guidance for 2007-08, and shaping the statutory guidance that will be needed under the new legislation.

Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is now being piloted at levels 2 (intermediate) and 3 (advanced) of the national qualifications framework in post-16 provision in 31 schools and colleges. From September 2006 a level 1 (foundation) model is also being piloted alongside the intermediate model in 14-19 provision in 18 centres.

The second cohort of Welsh baccalaureate summer advanced diploma results were released on 17 August. 632 (79 per cent of the 800 students that entered) completed the WBQ advanced diploma. Five hundred and fifty candidates (87 per cent of those that completed) successfully completed the full core certificate and 483 candidates (76 per cent) achieved the full WBQ advanced diploma. The 82 candidates that did not achieve the core certificate achieved an average of three key skills qualifications each.

Key elements from the summer 2006 intermediate level results are that so far 263 students have completed the Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma after one year of study. Entry at February 2006 was 722. Up to 211 students have deferred completion until 2006-07. Two hundred and six (78 per cent) of students that have completed the programme have achieved the core certificate and 167 (63 per cent) have achieved the full WBQ intermediate diploma. The 57 candidates that have completed the programme, but not achieved the core certificate, have achieved an average of three key skills qualifications each.

Learning Pathways 14-19

Providing better options and opportunities for young people means greater degree of collaborative work between partners including schools, colleges and other service providers. Our guidance on 'Learning Pathways 14-19' and our Extending Entitlement policies are already bearing fruit in terms of the development of partnership and network-based working arrangements to take forward delivery plans and provide real opportunity and choice for young people throughout Wales. Six key elements of Learning Pathways will ensure that, over time, all 14-19 learners receive the appropriate balance of learning experiences that best meet their needs.

Pathfinders

Geographic pathfinder projects are all about supporting the policy agenda set out in 'The Learning Country' and 14-19 Learning Pathways. They seek to explore how we can create effective and efficient learning networks capable of meeting the needs and expectations of learners. The 14-19 action plan sets out our intention to initiate pathfinder reviews in all areas by 2010. In doing this we recognise and hope to build upon the excellent work already being progressed by stakeholders using money made available from the common investment fund.

The Geographic pathfinder projects have been widely welcomed by stakeholders and have helped bring parties together to work on real solutions capable of meeting the challenging agenda we have set for post-16 education and training.

With regard to sectoral pathfinders, social care and construction are two areas of focus. We will be looking at the results of the consultation undertaken on the skills needs of the social care sector to identify actions and priorities for the development of learning provision to support this important sector.

Future Skills Wales research and the development of the CITB-Construction Skills sector skills agreement have highlighted the significance of construction as a key element of the Welsh economy. We will be launching, jointly with the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks a jobs, skills and business support strategy for the construction sector.

Initial Teacher Training

We are restructuring initial teacher training so that it can deliver teachers with qualified teacher status to better meet the needs of maintained schools in Wales. We also continue to offer a range of incentives aimed at attracting the best quality, highly committed students to train and teach in Wales.

We have put in place an initial teacher training change plan to restructure initial teacher training so that intake targets, courses and course availability can deliver teachers with qualified teacher status to better meet the needs of maintained schools in Wales.

Skills and Employment Action Plan

We are tackling the problems of low skills in adults and promoting the development of higher level skills to support a strong sustainable economy. The second skills and employment action plan is helping us to make real progress in taking forward action to tackle the skills and employment challenges facing us.

The plan provides a strategic framework for policies and programmes to improve skills levels and help more people into sustainable employment.

Work-based Learning

We have been at the forefront of innovation in Wales, having scrapped age limits and introduced the modern skills diploma providing opportunities for learners to improve their skills and knowledge at NVQ level 4. We are also working with the sector skills councils to develop new work-focused learning pathways which will enable young people to combine learning at school with learning in the workplace and to achieve quick progression to a modern apprenticeship.

Needs of People not in Employment, Education or Training

In January 2005 we published a short action plan to tackle the issue of around 12 per cent of our 16 and 17 year-olds being neither in employment nor in education or training. Further research has been carried out and we are in the process of drawing up a comprehensive approach to this major issue. We aim to make full use of European funding in taking this forward.

National Planning and Funding System

Following the 2005-06 and 2006-07 allocations to the LEAs and the FE institutions, officials undertook a pause and review period to review the impact of the NPFS on both sectors. Items reviewed included issues as informed by Fforwm and colleagues from the LEAs as well as routine refinements. The relevant changes have been communicated to the sectors, and as a result the FE institutions planning information and 2006-07 funding target have been amended to reflect the changes in the model.

Student Support Functions

The student support functions under the Higher Education Act 2004 transferred from the Department for Education and Skills to the National Assembly for Wales, effective from 1 September 2006 and we are in the process of formally delegating certain student support functions to our delivery partner—Welsh local authorities and the Student Loans Company. We have already made significant commitments that will improve learner support in Wales, including Assembly Learning Grants, educational maintenance allowances and financial contingency funds.

Higher Education—Widening Access

Widening access is a key priority in my strategy for Higher Education in Wales ‘Reaching Higher’ and Welsh higher education institutions consistently outperform UK averages in attracting a wide social mix of students, many of which are under-represented in HE. To date, Wales has been at the forefront, in UK terms, of increasing participation from under-represented groups.

As part of the widening access agenda, four ‘Reaching Wider’ partnerships were established in 2003 to work specifically in Communities First areas. The partnerships are engaged in a wide range of projects designed to promote higher education to those whose families and communities have no tradition of going to university.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding of small schools in Wales? (WAQ47868)

Jane Davidson: Funding for schools in Wales is provided mainly on a non-hypothecated basis through the local government revenue settlement. Local education authorities distribute funding to schools according to their local funding formula, which recognises local circumstances. LEAs can make additional funding available to small schools through appropriate factors in their funding formula, and

many of them do so. Since 2002-03 we have also provided additional funding to authorities for small schools for the purposes of innovation and collaboration, community use of school premises and support for teaching heads. In 2006-07, a total of £4.1 million is available.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the gap between the number of pupils eligible and the number that actually register for free school meals in Wales? (WAQ47870)

Jane Davidson: The annual school census collects details of pupils who are entitled to free school meals (where they are known to the school or the LEA). The numbers of pupils who are entitled to free school meals but do not register is not known.

School meals and the provision of free school meals in particular are an important aspect of the Welsh Assembly Government's antipoverty strategy. In deprived areas, where the majority of meals are free, these set the quality for the whole service.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognise that a good diet is important both to school performance and health and are determined to help secure, maintain and improve the health of our children and young people by taking a whole-school approach to food and nutrition. 'Appetite for Life', which is the report of the Assembly Government's food in schools working group, was launched for public consultation on 29 June and includes 41 proposals on how we can continue to improve the food on offer in our schools. The consultation period ends on 31 October 2006.

Proposal 23 of 'Appetite for Life' recommends that schools and local authorities should:

- aim for complete take-up of free school meals entitlement; and
- undertake an energetic marketing campaign to maximise uptake of school meals by the end of the implementation period (2009 in primary schools and 2010 in secondary schools).

We will be examining the outcome of this consultation and in the light of these will be producing an action plan next spring to implement these proposals.

Michael German: What guidance has the Minister issued to LEAs on the introduction of sprinklers in new build and modernised schools? (WAQ47871)

Jane Davidson: Building regulations apply in England and Wales and exist to ensure the health and safety of people in and around buildings.

Part B of the regulations refer to fire safety and apply 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;
- to inhibit fire from spreading over the internal linings of buildings;
- to ensure the stability of buildings in the event of fire;
- to ensure that 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.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the employment of classroom assistants on term time contracts? (WAQ47872)

Jane Davidson: The employment of school support staff is a matter for local authorities and their schools. However, I know that local authorities are working on 'single status' reviews in which the pay and responsibilities of school support staff are looked at to ensure that they are appropriate for the roles they fill and comparable to others carrying out work of equal value within the local authority.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on the summer's GCSE and advanced level exam results? (WAQ47873)

Jane Davidson: Our GCSE and Welsh baccalaureate intermediate students are to be congratulated on their wonderful results and they have every reason to celebrate.

With the support of teachers and parents our students have once again proved Wales to be a truly learning country. Not only have we improved on our previous best performances but our GCSE results in Wales again compare well with England and Northern Ireland, with whom we share the national qualifications framework.

I am particularly pleased that the overall pass rate for GCSE at grades A* to G, the percentage achieving A* to C and A* to A are all up on last year. The results for the Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma were also impressive—63 per cent of the candidates achieved the full Welsh baccalaureate intermediate diploma and 78 per cent of them successfully completed the intermediate core certificate.

Pass rates for GCSE English and Mathematics have continued to improve as has performance in each of the individual sciences and the science double award.

The changes we are making mean that students in Wales are increasingly able to choose learning pathways that suit their interests, learning styles and abilities but that also ensure they are ready for continued learning, be that at school, college or the workplace. Our focus on skills in Wales is already paying dividends as shown by the fact that 16 per cent of key skills awards are being made to students in Wales.

The growing popularity of the Welsh baccalaureate is being reinforced from this month when the pilot extends to include intermediate and foundation levels in key stage 4, marking another important step towards the 14-19 Learning Pathways that we are developing. The current post-16 intermediate level students have managed to complete a huge amount in a short time. Many have followed the Welsh baccalaureate programme for just one year and can be very proud of what they have achieved.

These results are only the start and I hope that students will use them to go on to further education, higher education, training and employment to help ensure that Wales is a prosperous and successful learning country—and secure their own personal fulfilment too.

Our A-level students across Wales can be equally proud of their examination achievements this year. Once again the hard work and dedication of students and teachers and the support of parents has been rewarded with superb results.

The A-level results are the culmination of two years of dedicated study and for many herald the start of further study at university, college or work-related learning. For AS students they will form the basis for many to continue on to study A-levels.

Students can rightly take pride in their achievements. The overall pass rate at grades A to E is now nearly 97 per cent, with passes at grade A nearly 24 per cent of the entries.

The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to support the excellent work of everyone involved in building on our current high performance in line with our vision of Wales as a learning country.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister state (a) the amount of money allocated by the Assembly Government for the free school breakfasts scheme for each year since 2003 and (b) publish the cost per pupil of providing a free school breakfast? (WAQ47879)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government has made the following amounts available for the primary school free breakfast initiative

2004-05	£1.5 million
2005-06	£3.5 million
2006-07	£5.5 million
2007-08	£10 million
2008-09	£10 million

All the costings we are currently using for the initiative are available on the primary schools free breakfast initiative website at <http://urlcutter.com/healthybreakfast>. These figures were developed in partnership with stakeholders.

The formula for allocating the funding for this initiative is not currently on an overall cost per child basis. The guidance available to schools for operating the free breakfast initiative sets out the funding available for individual elements of the scheme for example food and supervision.

Lisa Francis: Would the Minister make a statement on the number of filled and vacant teaching posts in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ47882)

Jane Davidson: The information is in the table below. For this answer Mid and West Wales has been defined as the local authorities of Powys, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. Posts in all maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools are included. Supply teachers are excluded. The figures refer to the situation as at the day of the school census in January of each year.

Filled and vacant teaching posts in Mid and West Wales

	2005	2006
Full-time filled posts	4,315	4,278
Part-time filled posts	830	883
Total filled posts	5,145	5,161
Vacancies	20	26

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? (WAQ47883)

Jane Davidson: The results of the Higher Education Statistics Agency destination of leavers from higher education survey indicate that of newly-qualified teachers in 2004-05, completing initial teacher training courses in Wales and who were in teaching posts, 29 per cent of PGCE qualifiers and 24 per cent of first degree qualifiers were in teaching posts in the UK outside Wales.

Lisa Francis: How many people in Wales have completed teacher training for each year since 1999 and would the Minister break the figures down for each county council area? (WAQ47884)

Jane Davidson: The information requested is shown in the tables below. Welsh-domiciled students completing initial teacher training 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	65	50	40	60	60	60	45
Gwynedd	110	95	115	100	85	95	105
Conwy	55	70	55	60	90	70	65
Denbighshire	70	50	50	45	45	60	55
Flintshire	70	60	75	80	75	75	95
Wrexham	55	60	45	70	75	80	65
Powys	100	60	75	70	70	85	65
Ceredigion	75	55	55	55	55	85	65
Pembrokeshire	70	75	65	80	60	85	75
Carmarthenshire	125	130	130	160	160	145	160
Swansea	180	165	175	180	180	195	175
Neath Port Talbot	100	80	95	80	75	85	90
Bridgend	90	70	80	85	85	80	110
Vale of Glamorgan	120	65	80	75	70	70	85
Rhondda Cynon Taf	140	135	130	145	140	150	130
Merthyr Tydfil	30	20	30	30	30	25	30
Caerphilly	105	105	70	95	110	95	95
Blaenau Gwent	25	20	25	35	30	20	25
Torfaen	75	55	35	45	45	50	50
Monmouthshire	75	65	75	60	65	75	65
Newport	80	65	85	70	65	85	80
Cardiff	195	185	270	220	260	270	270
All (b)	2,025	1,750	1,905	1,910	1,950	2,055	2,025

The figures above represent Welsh initial teacher training qualifiers from all institutions across the UK. The figures below show the total qualifiers from Welsh institutions.

	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	2,330	1,960	2,085	2,065	2,115	2,110	2,105

Source: HESA.

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

(b) Includes Welsh domiciles where LEA is unknown.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for her portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47894) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: For what reasons has your department refused to endorse the new venture of the Committee of the BCN (new Welsh bible) to publish a bilingual New Testament using the revised text of the BCN and the English Standard Version as an essential tool for those studying the scriptures for GCSE and A-level courses in schools and colleges of higher education? (WAQ47904)

Jane Davidson: It is not our practice to endorse materials that we have not specifically commissioned. With regards to GCSE and A-level courses, it is for schools and colleges to choose resources to support the running of the chosen courses, except in cases where awarding bodies specify particular texts for study, in which case it is their responsibility to do so.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister give an update on the parenting action plan? (WAQ47914)

Jane Davidson: Our parenting action plan was published in December 2005. It sets out what the Assembly Government is doing to ensure that parents in Wales receive the advice and support they need in raising their children confidently. A full progress report will be published later this year.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for his portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47896) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail any evidence he has considered from studies outside of Wales that shows a high incidence of bovine tuberculosis in cattle in areas where a high incidence of bovine TB among wildlife has been observed? (WAQ47974)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): As I have made clear, I am committed to an evidence-based approach in developing policy and taking decisions in relation to bovine TB. I will, therefore, continue to take account of the scientific and other evidence that continues to be provided by a range of organisations including the independent scientific group on cattle TB but also from other sources within and outside Wales. The Wales TB action group is also charged with monitoring scientific progress on the disease and will advise me on measures that the Assembly Government could take to tackle bovine TB

Questions to the Finance Minister

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government's policies have improved public services in north Wales? (WAQ47851)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): The First Minister reported on improvements in public services in his annual report 2006. For example, the number of staff directly employed by the NHS in Wales has increased and waiting times have fallen significantly.

Together with this we have supported the delivery of services to north Wales with the provision of some £790 million of Assembly Government funding for 2006-07, an increase of 4.8 per cent.

'Delivering the Connections', our five-year action plan, is also driving forward the changes we want to see in how public services are developed and delivered.

As part of this plan, we commissioned Sir Jeremy Beecham to carry out a review of local public service delivery. We have welcomed the recommendations of that review and I will publish a response in the autumn, which will outline how we intend to take our public service reform agenda forward.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's achievements in the field of local government in Newport East? (WAQ47852)

John Griffiths: What measures has the Minister taken to support Newport East in improving the local services it delivers since 2003? (WAQ47853)

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 who have 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 1000 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 its 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.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of town and community councils in Wales? (WAQ47857)

Sue Essex: Community and town councils in Wales enhance the local government system as a whole and provide important benefits to the communities they serve. This is of special significance now at a time when the Assembly Government's top priority is improving public services in the coming years.

Citizen focus and collaboration are at the heart of our approach and we are clear that this course fits better with Wales's size, values and attitudes.

Within this agenda, community and town councils are closer to the electorate than any other tier of government. This means that they have many direct ways of identifying and delivering the citizen's and the communities' priorities for services, engagement and activities. Sir Jeremy Beecham's recently published report of his review of local service delivery, 'Beyond Boundaries' recommends that local authorities should engage with community councils as citizen advocates and service providers where they have the capacity to fulfil these roles. The Assembly Government commissioned this review last year as part of the action plan for implementing our 'Making the Connections' strategy and we will be issuing our response later this year.

I look forward to community and town councils continuing to make a valuable contribution to the quality of life of their communities and to the strategic agenda of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office to ensure that the money already spent on consultations regarding the proposed merger of police forces in Wales will not be passed onto the council tax payers? (WAQ47858)

Sue Essex: I have not had any discussions with the Home Office; it is a matter for the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for her portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47898)

Sue Essex: The information requested is not currently held in this format. It will be necessary to collate information from a number of sources and several areas of the Assembly, including the former ASPBs. The information will be available during the week commencing 9 October 2006. ASPBs have been asked to write to you with the requested information.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on public service reform in Wales? (WAQ47919)

Sue Essex: 'Delivering the Connections', our five-year action plan, is driving forward the changes we want to see in how public services are developed and delivered.

As part of this plan, we commissioned Sir Jeremy Beecham to carry out a review of local public service delivery. We have welcomed the recommendations of that review and I will publish a response in the autumn which will outline how we intend to take our public service reform agenda forward.

Glyn Davies: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that companies based outside Wales do not have an unfair advantage in seeking business with the public sector over businesses based in Wales? (WAQ47962)

Sue Essex: The Welsh Assembly Government is a strong supporter of Welsh businesses, which benefit from a number of initiatives that assist them to compete on a level playing field for public sector contracts. These initiatives are not available to English-based businesses. These initiatives include:

- the local supplier development project, which helps Welsh suppliers to tender for public sector business;

- the business procurement taskforce, chaired by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, recently developed and launched ‘Opening Doors—The Charter for SME Friendly Procurement’ to improve access to public sector opportunities for smaller more local suppliers;
- a sub group of the business procurement taskforce, the Welsh initiative for procurement partnerships, is working to identify ‘supplier voids’ where Welsh-based companies are not currently winning as much Welsh public sector business as they should.

Glyn Davies: What checks and controls are in place to ensure that companies and businesses tendering for public sector contracts in Wales are financially viable? (WAQ47963)

Sue Essex: This is a matter for each contracting authority across the Welsh public sector. However, ‘Opening Doors—The Charter for SME Friendly Procurement’, in an effort to assist small and medium-sized enterprises to win more public sector business, advocates assessing financial viability against risk on a tender by tender basis. This contrasts to the general policy of seeking three years audited accounts irrespective of the size or risk with the contract being tendered.

The need to have been in business for a minimum of three years is recognised as a significant barrier for SMEs and new companies bidding for Welsh Assembly Government work. WAG assessed the risk, and removed the need for companies to submit three years of accounts before being considered for inclusion on tender lists for contracts valued below £100,000. For contracts above that threshold, two years of accounts are now required. WAG was the first government organisation to do this.

WAG also removed the over-reliance rule, designed to prevent small businesses becoming too dependent on one supplier, such as the Assembly. However this was preventing some SMEs from bidding at all, and the emphasis has now been passed to the individual company to assess their risk of dependency.

Glyn Davies: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that Welsh companies and businesses operating within Wales are encouraged to tender for public sector contracts? (WAQ47964)

Sue Essex: The national procurement website is jointly managed by Value Wales (Buy4wales), which is within my department and the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Sell2wales). Sell2wales allows suppliers of any size to register, for free, against the commodities or services they can supply to public sector organisations.

Suppliers receive email alerts for contract opportunities posted by Welsh public sector organisations and also for all English language contract opportunities published by the European Publications Office.

Public sector organisations are strongly encouraged to advertise contracts and tender opportunities above and below the EU thresholds through Buy4wales.

To date contract opportunities worth £2.2 billion have been advertised, by 76 Welsh public sector organisations. In August alone £582 million of contract opportunities were posted.

Officials in my department worked closely with the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks’s local supplier development project in promoting the ‘Opening Doors’ charter. The local supplier development project provides support to Welsh based businesses that wish to tender for public sector contracts via training on the tender process and one-to-one assistance in drafting tender submissions.

‘Opening Doors—The Charter for SME Friendly Procurement’ details principles to facilitate the relationship between public sector and SME communities.

Glyn Davies: What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks about aligning Welsh Assembly Government policies on procurement with policies on job creation, supporting enterprise and business support within Wales? (WAQ47965)

Sue Essex: We have regular discussions on these matters. Our shared objective is ensuring that Welsh businesses have the support, advice and information to enable them to compete effectively for any business, including that involving the public sector. In our agreement that Andrew Davies AM would chair the business procurement taskforce, we are underlining our strategic and cross-cutting approach of matching development of the Welsh economy to the commercial needs of the public sector.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on current health deficits in Wales? (WAQ47831)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Brian Gibbons): I refer the Assembly Member to the oral statement that I made yesterday in Plenary.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government is encouraging more people to become foster carers in Wales? (WAQ47832)

Brian Gibbons: Fostering agencies are responsible for recruitment according to local demand, which varies. Past experience is that local campaigns are far more effective than national campaigns and that campaigns have to be managed effectively by fostering agencies, with staff available to respond quickly to expressions of interest. The evidence also confirms that most carers prefer to foster local children.

The Assembly Government issued guidance on placement choice and stability in 2003 and shared best practice in the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to supporting local authorities in recruiting and retaining foster carers. I recently announced the awarding of a grant of £19,549 to Fostering Network to establish a helpline for foster carers in Wales.

We are committed to making sure that the funding foster carers receive reflects the costs of the care they provide. I will shortly consult on proposals to introduce national minimum fostering allowances for Wales to ensure fairer payments for foster carers and improve consistency and transparency.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of care for people with Alzheimer's? (WAQ47834)

Brian Gibbons: The national service framework for older people was launched on 20 March. One of the standards concerns mental health in older age, addressing the specific issues faced by older people and their carers. The framework describes the services which people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can expect to receive.

Dementia is a severe risk to independence and may invoke significant care needs in addition to clinical treatment. The ability to carry out routine tasks such as dressing, washing, toileting and shopping is likely to deteriorate over time, and support with these tasks will need to be provided by carers (often an elderly relative), or health and social care staff within the person's own home or in a care environment.

The management and treatment of dementia involves:

- explaining the diagnosis to the older person and any carers and giving relevant information about sources of help and support, the likely prognosis and options for packages of care. Such support may come from specialist mental health teams, or from voluntary sector agencies such as the Alzheimer's Society;
- agreeing a holistic care plan that addresses the person's health and social care needs with a focus on enabling independence;
- providing structured psycho-education programmes for carers, to enable them to better understand the condition and the effects on the person's behaviour and functions, and how to be most effective in their caring role;
- making appropriate referrals to help with fears and worries, distress, practical and financial issues that may affect the person and their carer;
- at all stages emphasising the unique qualities of the individual with dementia and recognising their personal and social needs;
- using non-pharmacological management strategies such as cognitive stimulation, cognitive rehabilitation and reminiscence, physical therapy, occupational therapy, ensuring good nutrition etc alongside drug therapy. These may be beneficial in reducing the impact or slowing down the progression of the disease;
- behavioural and pharmacological interventions for more serious problems, such as delusions and hallucinations, serious distress or danger from behaviour disturbance;
- making use of available technology to enable people with dementia to remain living in their own homes, and/or to reduce risks—e.g. voice-activated systems, automatic lighting, alert systems linked to call centres—which are programmed to recognise any unusual behaviour or activity.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance on the treatment and care of people with dementia is under development and due for publication in December 2006.

The following table sets out the actions from the national service framework for older people that are expected of local health boards and local authorities with regard to Alzheimer's and dementia services in Wales.

Action	By when	By whom
local commissioning strategies include a joint strategic plan for developing mental health services for older people (and younger people with dementia), incorporating arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timely diagnosis within primary care and referral for assessment; • effective treatment, care and support—in community, in-patient and care home settings; • effective liaison with general health, social care and housing services 	End of March 2007	LHBs and local authorities in conjunction with service providers
A range of comprehensive and integrated statutory, independent and voluntary sector services are provided for older people with mental health problems which, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support people to maintain their independence within the community; • help avoid or minimise crisis; • provide specialist advice and treatment; • provide long-term care 	End of March 2008	LHBs, local authorities, NHS trusts, voluntary and independent sector service providers
A range of specialist services and support is provided for younger people with dementia and their families	End of March 2008	LHBs, local authorities, NHS trusts, voluntary and independent sector service providers

<p>Diagnostic and referral pathways and protocols are developed between primary care, secondary care, community care and voluntary services, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older people with depression, anxiety and other functional mental illness; • older people with dementia; • younger people with dementia; <p>These should complement the unified assessment/Centre for Policy on Ageing processes</p>	<p>End of March 2008</p>	<p>LHBs, NHS trusts, local authorities and the voluntary sector</p>
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The Welsh Assembly Government has made available £3 million to local authorities in 2006-07 to provide additional front-line services for carers of people with a mental health problem. This grant will be maintained as an annual WAG direct grant for three years (until the end of 2008-09). A review of the grant scheme will be undertaken during 2008-09.

John Griffiths, Deputy Minister with responsibility for older people, has been appointed as carers' champion for the Welsh Assembly Government. As part of his new role, Mr Griffiths will be responsible for ensuring a more effective co-ordinated approach to cross-cutting carers' issues and overseeing the development and delivery of an updated and refocused carers strategy for Wales. This appointment will send a clear and strong message to other organisations in Wales about the priority and importance the Welsh Assembly Government attaches to carers' issues.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the financial position of local health boards? (WAQ47835)

Brian Gibbons: I refer the Assembly Member to the oral statement that i made yesterday in Plenary.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's investment in GP's surgeries in Wales? (WAQ47842)

Brian Gibbons: I am pleased to give an update on the Assembly Government's level of investment in improving and modernising general medical services premises.

In most cases new surgery development schemes are being taken forward by third-party developers. This results in minimal NHS capital spending on premises development. The developer provides the building for the practice who would then take on the lease. The Assembly then pay the revenue including the rental costs for the term of the lease which is usually 20 years. This arrangement continues as long as general medical services continue to be provided at the premises.

Ongoing funding

£26.9 million has been allocated to LHBs in 2006-07 to cover existing revenue schemes. In addition the recurring rental costs of newly approved revenue schemes will be added to the yearly allocation.

New funding system

Since 1 April 2004 when a new GMS contract was introduced funding has been held centrally and bids are submitted by LHBs to the primary care estates forum for approval. This does not delay the process but gives the Assembly Government a strategic view of premises development across Wales. Bids are based on identified priorities in the LHB's estate strategy which must be aligned to 'Designed for Life'. There are two strands to this funding:

- (i) development bids submitted by LHBs for new replacement premises—these are essential to modernise the existing primary care estate and bring it in line with twenty-first century standards with fit-for-purpose premises ensuring a positive environment for patients and staff;

- (ii) improvement grants—these are improvements to GMS premises that are undertaken while maintaining the services at the practice. An example would be works to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

It is important to realise that for the most part the Assembly funds the difference between the rent on existing and new premises. This means that for a comparatively small revenue outlay we can support major capital schemes. I am pleased that so far our new system is supporting some £37 million capital value of new GMS premises across Wales.

Jonathan Morgan: What has been the total cost of Herceptin being prescribed in 2006 and will the Minister give an average and unit cost per patient? (WAQ47897)

Jonathan Morgan: What impact assessment has the Minister made on the Health budget since the routine prescribing of Herceptin was introduced? (WAQ47902)

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients in Wales have received Herceptin in 2006 and what assessment has the Minister made on how this figure compares to England? (WAQ47903)

Brian Gibbons: We do not hold this level of information centrally. The cost of preparing some of the required data would be disproportionate and the Assembly's advisory limit on cost would be exceeded.

Trastuzumab (Herceptin) is licensed in Wales for use in advanced and early stage breast cancer and its use by the NHS has been approved by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. The decision to prescribe trastuzumab is a clinical one based on the nature of the tumour and the appropriateness of the treatment for the individual concerned (in accordance with guidance). In assessing the impact on commissioning plans in 2006-07 of the implementation of this drug for early breast cancer, Local health boards have been supported by guidance from the all-Wales medicine strategy group and the cancer networks.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for his portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47899) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail the number and location of assessment units for oxygen provision in Wales? (WAQ47907)

Brian Gibbons: Assessment centres of various kinds are present in NHS trusts throughout Wales. It was not envisaged that the units would necessarily be stand-alone bespoke facilities. However, information concerning their specific use is not held centrally.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the waiting times for brachytherapy treatment? (WAQ47909)

Brian Gibbons: The service is not being commissioned in 2006-07, therefore there are no waiting times for this service.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding for brachytherapy? (WAQ47910)

Brian Gibbons: Health Commission Wales is responsible for commissioning brachytherapy but it has not been identified as a priority for investment in 2006. As a result this service will not be commissioned in the current financial year. HCW is working with Velindre NHS Trust to explore the possibility of establishing a local service for the future.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on urgent ambulance journey times? (WAQ47917)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh ambulance service undertakes a significant number of urgent journeys each year. During 2005-06 the Welsh ambulance service completed over 63,000 urgent journeys, of which, over 43,500 across Wales met the standard for the service. The standard states that responses to urgent calls should arrive at hospital no later than 15 minutes after the arrival time requested by the doctor.

Jenny Randerson: Does the Minister have any plans to introduce consolidated regulations for pharmacies along the lines of those introduced in England in 2005 and, if so, when will they be introduced? (WAQ47959)

Brian Gibbons: While it would be desirable to consolidate the regulations, this must be considered alongside other priorities, and consequently it has not yet been timetabled.

Jenny Randerson: When does the Minister plan to introduce the rural regulations for pharmaceutical services which went out to public consultation last year? (WAQ47960)

Brian Gibbons: The pharmacy contract is regularly reviewed on both a national and local level. I remain committed to ensuring that rural areas are well served by their health professionals and officials are currently working up proposals taking into account the responses to the consultation on 'control of entry' which will ensure this continues to happen.

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the availability of Yttrium for the treatment of carcinoid tumours of the liver for Welsh patients? (WAQ47961)

Brian Gibbons: The use of Yttrium in the treatment of carcinoid tumours of the liver is a matter for individual clinicians in consultation with their patients. Experimental studies are underway, using internally injected radioactive isotopes in selected carcinoid patients, in a number of research centres. The current favoured isotopes are Yttrium 90 (Y90) and Lutetium 177.

Jenny Randerson: Does the Minister intend to add to the GP contract enhanced services for the prevention and detection of osteoporosis and if so what indicators does he expect to use? (WAQ47972)

Brian Gibbons: The GMS contract is negotiated on a four-country basis. The quality and outcomes framework of the contract encourages the provision of high-quality care in chronic condition management. Evidence for the inclusion of indicators for specific interventions, that are in line with best practice and demonstrably improve the care of patients, are considered for inclusion in the quality and outcomes framework by an independent expert panel which makes recommendations to the negotiating teams.

The current panel is a collaboration between the Society for Academic Primary Care, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the University of Birmingham. Evidence for the inclusion of indicators for

Osteoporosis was considered by the panel during the 2005-06 review. The evidence, panel's review and recommendations can be found on the Birmingham University Department of Primary Care and General Practice website at <http://www.pcpoh.bham.ac.uk/primarycare/QOF/PDF/Osteoarthritis.pdf>

The report shows that seven osteoporosis indicators were evaluated by the panel. These were then considered along with indicators from 39 other reports compiled by the panel, during negotiations between UK health departments and the General Practitioners Committee. Unfortunately the case for inclusion of the osteoporosis indicators was felt not to be as strong as other clinical priorities.

There is agreement between the negotiating parties that the quality and outcomes framework will continue to be reviewed to ensure it evolves in line with emerging evidence and keeps up with best practice.

Jonathan Morgan: What assessment has the Minister made of how current average deficits in NHS Wales compare to those in England? (WAQ47975)

Brian Gibbons: While the Assembly receives regular monthly financial reports and forecasts from the trusts and LHBs in Wales no such information is obtained for English trusts and primary care trusts, and no comparisons are therefore possible.

In the case of LHBs, effective comparisons would also be difficult to make because of the differences in the structures and services that are provided by LHBs and primary care trusts.

Jonathan Morgan: What progress has the Minister made in reducing deficits within NHS Wales since he took office? (WAQ47976)

Brian Gibbons: I made a statement to the plenary session on the 27 September 2006, which detailed the measures undertaken to reduce the deficits within the NHS in Wales.

The financial performance of NHS organisations is regularly monitored throughout the year via the regional offices. In the first instance, the regional office will work with any organisation which is reporting difficulties to ensure that action is taken to remedy the problem.

If, following this work, it is identified that that an organisation is facing problems which it cannot recover in the year and/or has underlying problems which affect the ability to meet the statutory break-even target, then the organisation must produce a strategic change and efficiency plan (SCEP) or, where a SCEP has already been agreed, a revised SCEP, in line with Welsh health circular (2004) 34.

Officials may call for an independent review of the financial management of an organisation in order to assist in the production of a robust SCEP, as has happened in the Gwent health community.

It remains the responsibility of the individual accounting officer, however, to achieve break-even and to agree any recovery plans where necessary. Very wide-ranging powers exist under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and under the accountable officer arrangements in order to ensure that organisations achieve performance targets (including financial performance).

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister provide details of a) the current financial deficits faced by LHBs and trusts in Wales b) up to date details of financial deficits for the 2006-07 financial year and c) will he make a statement? (WAQ47977)

Brian Gibbons: The financial position for LHBs and trusts for 2005-06 is set out within the summarised accounts, extracts of which are reproduced below, and was also referred to in my statement to the plenary on 27 September 2006.

Strategic change and efficiency plans have been agreed with two organisations in 2006-07, with a total planned deficit of £5.9 million. Forecast deficits in other organisations are still the subject of review by officials and it is too early at this stage to give a clear statement on what the potential position for 2006-07 will be.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for his portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded? (WAQ47900) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in improving the quality of housing in Wales? (WAQ47924)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): The Welsh housing quality standard is the target for the physical and environmental condition of existing social housing. All social landlords are expected to demonstrate, through business plans, the achievability of meeting the standard by 2012 and its continuing maintenance during the thirty-year planning period together with annual reporting of progress against the standard. National assessments of progress are provided through periodic living in Wales surveys.

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills regarding the role of the education system in tackling anti-social behaviour? (WAQ47925)

Edwina Hart: I have regularly discussed the all-Wales schools programme, which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, with the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. The programme forms part of the personal and social education curriculum and aims to educate young people about the dangers of substance misuse, including binge drinking, which often contributes to anti-social behaviour.

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on assistance for first-time home buyers? (WAQ47926)

Edwina Hart: In June we issued a comprehensive package of policy measures and guidance aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing, including our affordable housing toolkit and revisions to planning policy. These should help to increase the opportunities available to first time buyers both inside and outside of the social housing grant programme.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the benefits that alleygating has delivered in Rhyll? (WAQ47927)

Edwina Hart: The Rhyl alleygating project is one of a range of crime reduction measures that has contributed to a 6.5 per cent fall in recorded crime figures for Rhyl in 2005-06.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the Communities First initiative in Higher Shotton? (WAQ47928)

Edwina Hart: The Higher Shotton Communities First partnership is working hard to support and develop the local community. To date it has received £613,581 of Communities First funding. The residents have participated in many training and development activities that have improved their lives and their community.

Ann Jones: What recent discussions has the Minister had regarding preventing the misuse of fireworks in Wales? (WAQ47929)

Edwina Hart: Regulations to control the use of fireworks are a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry. However, the misuse of fireworks in Wales is a matter of great concern which I discuss during my regular meetings with the chief fire officers.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's main objectives in the field of social justice and regeneration in Clwyd South? (WAQ47930)

Edwina Hart: Clwyd South benefits from a number of programmes that deliver our social justice and regeneration agenda: assisting fuel-poor households, for example, with over £1,355,000 spent in Clwyd South through the home energy efficiency scheme since 2000. The community safety partnerships are helping to tackle substance misuse, domestic abuse, crime and disorder. The Care and Repair agency helps older and disabled people to remain in their homes.

Karen Sinclair: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to tackle anti-social behaviour in Clwyd South? (WAQ47931)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government is supporting community safety partnerships to ensure a joined up, multi agency approach to combating anti-social behaviour. The Assembly's safer communities fund is providing £353,124 in 2006-07 to partnerships in Clwyd South and this is funding, among other things, a community punishment programme, a youth inclusion project, a substance misuse youth worker and a neighbourhood warden scheme. All partnerships in Wales also have designated anti-social behaviour co-ordinators to drive work forward on dealing with anti social behaviour.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the impact of acts of arson on communities in Wales and our fire and rescue services? (WAQ47933)

Edwina Hart: Deliberate fire setting continues to have a negative impact on the environment and communities. Fire and rescue service statistics show that in purely economic terms the cost to Wales in 2005-06 was £53.7 million.

We have worked for a number of years to combat the problem, having established arson reduction teams and a fund for local anti-arson projects. In addition the community fire safety committee is currently considering a draft arson reduction strategy for Wales.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the regulation of registered social landlords? (WAQ47934)

Edwina Hart: In my previous response to your oral question tabled on 27 May 2005, I indicated that a new regulatory system had been introduced to ensure that registered social landlords are properly managed, properly governed and financially viable. In March 2006 a revised regulatory code was published, fully reflecting the statutory powers of the National Assembly for Wales and setting out key expectations. The Wales Audit Office undertakes regular independent inspections of RSLs on behalf of the Assembly Government. The regulatory code forms the basis of the inspections which monitor, from the tenant's perspective, the effectiveness of the delivery of landlord services.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her policies for delivering social justice in Wales? (WAQ47936)

Edwina Hart: The social justice annual report for 2005 provides a comprehensive analysis of all programmes and policies across the Assembly Government aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion. The full report can be accessed electronically on the Assembly Government's internet site and an accompanying leaflet has been widely distributed throughout Wales.

Questions to the Business Minister

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister list the expenditure for her portfolio since 1999 on consultants employed by the Welsh Assembly Government and ASPBs, listing each item of expenditure awarded, the cost of each contract, the purpose of each item of expenditure and the dates on which they were awarded. (WAQ47892) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I refer you to the answer to WAQ47898.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to tackle racial discrimination? (WAQ47938)

The Business Minister (Jane Hutt): We are committed to tackling racial discrimination across Wales. We have published a race equality scheme to take forward our commitments under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote race equality, thus promoting the need to tackle racism, discrimination and inequality.

We work closely with the Commission for Race Equality and several other organisations to promote good relations across communities and help eliminate discrimination.

Michael German: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to promote open government? (WAQ47939) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks*

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): Our Code of Practice on Public Access to Information sets out the framework for public access to Assembly Government information. The policy reflected in our code describes how we go beyond the legal requirements which are contained within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

We have completed over 1,300 requests since 1 January 2005 when the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and environmental information regulations were commenced. We continue to ensure that experience of

dealing with requests is shared among staff through on-going training and a community of practice. These measures are helping us to consistently meet the high standards to which we are committed. Representatives from ASPBs are invited to attend key community of practice meetings so that they may develop good practice too.

We continue to review our procedure for handling requests for information and ensure that lessons learnt are taken into account. The procedure is published on the internet, which makes it possible for other public authorities to draw from it.

We are in the process of updating our widely-praised publication scheme to ensure that we routinely publish much information. The Information Commissioner's Office is engaged in this work and has provided very positive feedback.

Carl Sargeant: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to combat age discrimination in the workplace? (WAQ47940)

Jane Hutt: Ageism is not acceptable and the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to combating it. We are developing a number of initiatives aimed at tackling age discrimination in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is working with the Department for Work and Pensions to take forward the Age Positive Campaign in Wales, which aims to ensure employers focus on potential, skills and ability rather than age at all stages of the employment cycle—from recruitment through to training and retirement. We have also been working closely with the UK government to introduce the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations on 1 October 2006, which will make it illegal to discriminate against employees, trainees or job seekers because of their age.

Michael German: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to improve the accessibility and the information content on its website? (WAQ47941)

Jane Hutt: Website accessibility is defined by an international standard known as the web content accessibility guidelines. UK Government guidelines for new website development specify that all new public sector websites must be built to this standard. In the development of the new Welsh Assembly Government website we have met or exceeded the recommended standard.

- The site was designed following a process of user-centred design, which used volunteers to help define the information content and structure of the site;
- the website has met or exceeded key guidelines for accessibility, making it one of the most accessible websites in Wales;
- we have commissioned an independent audit into the accessibility of the current site. This is to be carried out by the Shaw Trust in the week commencing 25 September 2006. The recommendations made in the Shaw Trust report will inform future improvements to the site.