

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 12 March 2010

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

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

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

Nerys Evans (Mid and West Wales): Given the changes to the statutory indicators in the area of Welsh language education in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2010, how is it possible to implement a Welsh language education strategy. (WAQ55746) W

Answer issued on 12 March 2010

In order to monitor progress in implementing the Welsh-medium education Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government has set a number of targets based on outcomes that are central to its success. The data we need for the monitoring of these targets are, and will continue to be, available as part of the Assembly Government's routine statistical collections. The changes to statutory indicators in the area of Welsh language education will not impact on the collection of data for the purposes of monitoring the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

To ask the Minister for the Economy and Transport

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): For each tendering process, including the most recent, relating to the Cardiff-Yns Mon air service, how many bids were received by the Welsh Assembly Government and how many of these were deemed not to have met the criteria laid out in the tender. (WAQ55745)

Answer issued on 15 March 2010

All three bids received during the initial tendering of the air service in 2006-07 met the tender requirements. For the recent tender exercise, only one bid was received and that did not comply with the requirements of the tender

To ask the Minister for Health and Social Services

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister make a statement on her proposals to stop collecting and publishing information on NHS waiting times for outpatient appointments and inpatient admissions. (WAQ55744)

Answer issued on 15 March 2010

The Chief Statistician is currently consulting users on proposals to stop collecting and publishing information on NHS waiting time for outpatient appointments and inpatient admissions. The reasons for this consultation are clearly set out in the consultation paper which is available on the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/nhswaitingtimes.

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires the Chief Statistician to balance a number of considerations. These include the needs of current users of the statistics, the burden on data suppliers and the benefits arising from the use of the statistics. The consultation is intended to allow a wide range of user views to be heard.

The consultation is due to close on 16 April. Following this date the responses will be assessed and the Chief Statistician will take a decision on whether to stop the publication.

To ask the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What measures is the Minister taking to ensure businesses are aware of the relief to which they are entitled. (WAQ55739)

Answer issued on 17 March 2010

All ratepayers receive notification of the relief thresholds with their rates bills, and the Assembly Government has published details of the relief available on its website.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What consideration has the Minister given to the case for applying business rate relief automatically. (WAQ55740)

Answer issued on 17 March 2010

Local authorities are responsible for determining the eligibility of business premises for relief, and where they are able to do they apply it automatically.

Most business that fall within the general 25% or 50% relief thresholds have their relief applied automatically to their annual rates bills

Ratepayers are required to provide written confirmation that they meet the specific criteria for retail, child care and credit union relief, but only one such notification is required by regulations over the four year period of this aspect of the scheme.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many businesses have taken up rate relief entitlement since April 2005 and what are the take up figures as a % of all businesses entitled to (a) general 50% rate relief, (b) general 25% rate relief, (c) 25% retail rate relief, and (d) empty property relief. (WAQ55741)

Answer issued on 17 March 2010

These estimates are based on returns provided by local authorities in respect of financial year 2008-2009. Figures for previous years are not available.

a) Over 16,500 businesses received 50% rate relief, (b) over 28,800 received general 25% rate relief, (c) over 1,500 received 25% retail rate relief, and (d) over 15,000 received empty property relief.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What will be the number of businesses eligible for the following rate relief after the non-domestic rate revaluation in April 2010 (a) general 50% rate relief, (b) general 25% rate relief, (c) 25% retail rate relief, and (d) empty property relief. (WAQ55742)

Answer issued on 18 March 2010

It is not possible to give a number of business properties that will be eligible for relief, as this depends upon the individual circumstances of the property and the ratepayer.

Based upon information from the draft 2010-2011 rating lists compiled by the Valuation Office Agency We estimate that up to 20,000 potentially eligible properties will fall within the 50% relief thresholds, 34,400 will fall within the general 25% relief thresholds, and around 3,000 will fall within the 25% retail relief thresholds.

Eligibility for unoccupied property depends upon the rateable value and occupation of the property – all properties could potentially qualify for unoccupied property relief for at least 6 months, and all unoccupied properties with a rateable value under £18,000 will be exempted from paying rates.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What is the number of businesses currently eligible for (a) general 50% rate relief, (b) general 25% rate relief, (c) 25% rate relief, and (d) empty property relief. (WAQ55743)

Answer issued on 18 March 2010

It is not possible to give a number of business properties that are eligible for relief, as this depends upon the individual circumstances of the property and the ratepayer.

Based upon information from the 2005 rating lists compiled by the Valuation Office Agency we estimate that up to 19,000 potentially eligible properties fall within the 50% relief thresholds, 35,000 fall within the general 25% relief thresholds, and 3,100 fall within the 25% retail relief thresholds.

Eligibility for unoccupied property depends upon the rateable value and occupation of the property – all properties could potentially qualify for unoccupied property relief for at least 6 months, and all unoccupied properties with a rateable value under £15,000 are exempted from paying rates.

Nerys Evans (Mid and West Wales): What consultation has there been regarding the changes to the statutory indicators in the area of Welsh language education in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2010. (WAQ55747) W

Answer issued on 15 March 2010

We conducted a public consultation exercise on the whole set of statutory local government performance indicators between November 2009 and January 2010. We received over 40 responses, none of which opposed our proposals on Welsh-language education.

Nerys Evans (Mid and West Wales): What are the changes to the statutory indicators in Welsh language education in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2010. (WAQ55748) W

Answer issued on 15 March 2010

The set of statutory local government performance indicators will no longer include the percentage of children assessed in Welsh (first language) at key stages 2 and 3 from 1 April 2010. These data are, and will continue to be collected and published as part of the Assembly Government's routine statistical collections. There is no need to require their separate collection as performance indicators.