

Answers issued to Members on 1 May 2009

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

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

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Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's approach to composting in Wales? (WAQ53974)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): The Assembly Government's Waste Strategy strongly promotes the source separation of both food and garden waste, and supports its treatment and recycling back into soil. Suitable treatment can include both composting and anaerobic digestion, and both have been supported by the Assembly Government.

This support has included capital grant funding administered by the Waste and Resources Action Programme Cymru and the provision of advice through specialist waste advisors. It also includes support for the development of the PAS100 compost standard and the promotion of the use of the standard in both development and procurement of compost products.

There is now strong evidence that anaerobic digestion provides the most sustainable solution for food waste, because it produces renewable energy as well as a valuable soil enhancing material. Therefore anaerobic digestion is now the preferred option for the management of collected food waste and composting remains the preferred solution for garden waste. The Assembly Government is funding initiatives to ensure the establishment of markets for high quality compost and anaerobic digestion digestate. It is also providing extra funding to local authorities to ensure the collection of food waste from most households in Wales.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister advise how many people in each local authority area are living in fuel poverty and severe fuel poverty? (WAQ54029)

Jane Davidson: The most recent published Government figures on the number of people in Wales classified as being in fuel poverty were set out in the 2004 Living in Wales Property Survey.

The survey identified that there were around 246,000 people, living in 134,000 households, in Wales who were in fuel poverty. The survey did not provide a breakdown to Local Authority level.

Earlier this year, the Assembly Government published a series of Small Area Fuel Poverty Maps for Wales which gave an indication of the distribution of fuel poor households at a local level. The maps were developed as part of a research project undertaken by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government.

The maps are modelled on data from the 2004 Living in Wales Survey and the 2001 Census. The 2004 Living in Wales Survey identified the characteristics of households most likely to be in fuel poverty and the 2001 Census was used to match these fuel poor households to geographic areas.

The distribution of fuel poor households at Local Authority level, derived from the research project, is set out in the table below. The data are based on the Full Income definition of fuel poverty, in which Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit are included as income.

It is important to note that as these figures are derived from modelled data the number of fuel poor households will differ from that quoted in Living in Wales. The figures are unlikely to accurately reflect the level of fuel poverty today, but the relative concentration of fuel poor households between different Local Authority areas is unlikely to have changed significantly.

A further Living in Wales Property Survey was undertaken in 2008 and initial results should be published at the end of this year. This survey will provide us with more up to date figures on the number of fuel poor households in Wales, but the data will be presented at Wales, not Local Authority, level.

LA_NAME	Total No. of households	No. of households in Fuel Poverty – Full Income Definition	% of households in Fuel Poverty – Full Income Definition
Blaenau Gwent	29,574	4,460	15
Bridgend	53,332	6,592	12
Caerphilly	69,282	8,908	13
Cardiff	123,739	15,427	12
Carmarthenshire	73,185	10,830	15
Ceredigion	31,018	5,193	17
Conwy	48,159	7,635	16
Denbighshire	39,845	5,800	15
Flintshire	60,451	6,728	11
Gwynedd	49,108	10,175	21
Isle of Anglesey	28,295	4,995	18
Merthyr Tydfil	23,034	3,561	15
Monmouthshire	35,210	3,834	11
Neath Port Talbot	57,663	8,113	14
Newport	56,670	6,744	12
Pembrokeshire	48,427	7,395	15
Powys	53,844	7,699	14
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	94,691	14,792	16
Swansea	94,499	12,526	13
Vale of Glamorgan	48,768	5,665	12
Torfaen	37,481	4,220	11
Wrexham	53,210	7,312	14
Total Wales	1,209,485	168,604	14

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister advise what measures the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to tackle fuel poverty in Wales? (WAQ54030)

Jane Davidson: There are a number of different measures that the Assembly Government is taking to help tackle fuel poverty.

Our £23 million Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) provides free energy efficiency measures to eligible households to improve the energy efficiency of their property and reduce energy costs. The scheme also provides Benefit Entitlement Checks which can help households maximise their income.

Further energy efficiency measures will be provided through the £26 million allocation from the Strategic Capital Investment Fund (SCIF). This investment will focus on hard to treat properties and the more expensive measures needed to address their energy performance.

On energy prices, which can be a major factor in influencing fuel poverty, I am meeting regularly with the six big energy suppliers and the Energy Retail Association to address issues of concern.

Our recently launched consultation on a draft National Energy Efficiency and Savings Plan includes proposals for short term actions to help tackle fuel poverty. These include restructuring HEES to more effectively target fuel poor households, improving referral mechanisms between advice agencies and making more effective use of funding from energy supplier schemes. The consultation closes on 5 June.

Irene James (Islwyn): What funding has the Welsh Assembly Government provided to support the development of allotments in Wales? (WAQ54049)

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

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): When does the Minister intend to publish the Welsh Assembly Government's Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan? (WAQ53984)

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Would the Minister explain the delay in the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government's Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan? (WAQ53985)

Edwina Hart: The Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan was issued for consultation on 1st April 2009 and all key stakeholders, including Assembly Members, were sent a copy of it. The consultation will run for 16 weeks and close on 22nd July.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What are the Minister's plans regarding putting the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group on an equal footing with NICE? (WAQ53991)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): Statutory Directions came into force on 1 April 2009 to ensure Local Health Boards have a legal requirement to implement recommendations of the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG) within three months. This has put AWMSG guidance on an equal footing with NICE in Wales.

Peter Black (South Wales West): How many hospitals in Wales provide a multidisciplinary falls service for elderly patients? (WAQ54034)

Peter Black (South Wales West): How many patients fall every year in Wales? (WAQ54041)

Peter Black (South Wales West): How many patients presenting themselves as having fallen to NHS services will be seen in a multidisciplinary falls service? (WAQ54042)

Edwina Hart: This information is not held centrally.

Peter Black (South Wales West): How many Trusts and LHBs have currently got a freeze on recruitment and is it affecting clinical service provision? (WAQ54035)

Edwina Hart: I refer you to the answer I gave Andrew R.T. Davies on the 15 April (WAQ49536).

Peter Black (South Wales West): What discussions has the Minister had regarding when the Extending Professional Regulation Working Group is likely to publish its findings? (WAQ54045)

Edwina Hart: The final report from this UK working group is complete. It has been submitted to all Ministers simultaneously and will be published when recommendations have been considered. Timing will depend upon the degree of consensus from all parts of the UK.

Peter Black (South Wales West): What discussions has the Minister had regarding whether the Extending Professional Regulation Working Group will look into the statutory regulation for professionals who have already been put forward by the Health Professions Council as in need of statutory regulation? (WAQ54046)

Edwina Hart: The Report of the Extending Professional Regulation Working Group will contain recommendations for the four UK Governments to consider as to how decision-making of occupational and professional groups should be taken forward, including those known to be requesting statutory regulation.

Questions to the Assembly Commission

Eleanor Burnham (North Wales): What action is the Assembly Commissioner taking to promote the Payroll Giving Scheme in the Assembly? (WAQ54053)

The Commissioner for Assembly Resources (William Graham): The Assembly has offered a Give as you Earn scheme for charitable donations for many years. Any charity can be supported via the arrangements we have in place with the Charities Aid Foundation, and currently 20 Members and staff choose to do so.

The overall approach is to allow Members and staff to make their own choices rather than identifying preferred charities, and our support in this manner links into the Assembly Commission's corporate social responsibilities and sustainability policy. To better promote the scheme and the other charitable opportunities available to Members and staff that work for the Assembly we are currently creating a Charities page on the Assembly's intranet. We will actively promote the page once it is in place.