

Answers issued to Members on 14 April 2008

[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 Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What discussions has the Minister had regarding High Speed rail links from Wales to London? (WAQ51561)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): I have had no discussions myself. However a meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Transport is being arranged.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What proportion of Network Rail's capital funding has been spent in Wales for each year since 1999? (WAQ51562)

The Deputy First Minister: The information that you requested is not readily available.

Peter Black (South Wales West): What plans does he have to fund improvements to Swansea High Street Railway Station and will he make a statement? (WAQ51574)

The Deputy First Minister: The National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) Local Delivery Group for Wales has recommended that Swansea High Street Station is a priority scheme. Network Rail is currently scoping the optimum improvement work.

I will make a decision on whether to supplement the NSIP funding once the proposals are submitted to me.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What discussions has the Minister had with the UK Government regarding the cost of a High Speed rail link from Wales to London? (WAQ51583)

The Deputy First Minister: I have had no discussions about the cost of a high speed rail link. A meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport is being arranged.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): What assessment has the Minister made of the use of the free bus pass, for those who qualify, for extensive travel in England? (WAQ51584)

The Deputy First Minister: I have made no such assessment.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): What discussions has the Minister had with the UK Government with regards to the provision of free bus travel? (WAQ51585)

The Deputy First Minister: I have had no discussions with UK Government Ministers.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): Will the Minister provide an update on the provision of free bus travel in Wales? (WAQ51586)

The Deputy First Minister: In 2007-08, I made available almost £47m to support the free travel scheme for elderly and disabled people. I am also taking forward evaluations of the concessionary fare pilots for 16 to 18 year olds and severely disabled people.

Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Helen Mary Jones (Llanelli): Will the Minister make a statement on the percentage of the Apprenticeship Programmes budget spent on training the workforce in the public sector? (WAQ51555)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): The percentage of the apprenticeship programme budget anticipated to be spent on training the workforce in the public sector in 2007/08 is estimated at 1.8 percent. The accuracy of the statistical information in relation to this subject area will be greatly improved from September 2008 when additional fields will be added to the Welsh Assembly Government's learner record database.

Helen Mary Jones (Llanelli): Will the Minister confirm which of the Work Based Learning Programmes will be priority for funding in 2008-09? (WAQ51557)

Jane Hutt: We are committed to funding the youth guarantee group, unemployed adults and identified sector priorities. There is a continued commitment to fund the skill build programme for the youth guarantee group and unemployed adults, as well as commitment to fund framework delivery for the priority sectors. There is also a continued commitment to fund framework programmes for the built-in environment and early years care.

Further framework priorities are under consideration which will be communicated to the sector in the near future.

Helen Mary Jones (Llanelli): Will the Minister make a statement on the value of the Work Based Learning budget in Wales for 2007-08? (WAQ51558)

Jane Hutt: The published 2007-08 Work Based Learning budget was £100 million. This consisted of £83 million of core funding, augmented by £17 million of European Funding.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Paul Davies (Preseli Pembrokeshire): Could the Minister detail whether the Welsh Assembly Government has any proposals to alter the current legislation in respect of private sewer systems? (WAQ51580)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): Currently private sewerage may be adopted by the sewerage undertaker (ie one of the water and sewerage companies) that serves the area, using discretionary powers set out in the Water Industry Act 1991.

The Water Act 2003 amended the 1991 Act to enable the Welsh Ministers to make regulations, in relation to sewerage undertakers whose areas are wholly or mainly in Wales, requiring those undertakers to comply with schemes under which they will have to exercise their powers to adopt private sewerage in specified circumstances. Such regulations would, in effect, remove undertakers' current discretion in adopting private sewerage.

The new provisions came into force on 1 April 2007. I announced on 25 July that I had taken the next step toward transferring private sewers into the ownership of the Welsh sewerage undertakers by issuing a related consultation paper. The joint Welsh Assembly Government and Defra consultation paper sought views on how to take forward this policy, including whether to phase the transfer of private sewers to

sewerage undertakers. It also explored options to prevent the proliferation of new private sewers, to avoid the recurrence of existing problems in the future.

The consultation exercise closed on 19 October. The responses are still being considered before I and my counterpart in England decide the best way forward.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister confirm the number of Local Health Boards that have responded to the audit of services for older people, which is part of the implementation work programme for the National Service Framework for Older People? (WAQ51546)

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister make a statement on plans to publish the results of the audit of services for older people, which is part of the implementation work programme for the National Service Framework for Older People? (WAQ51560)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): The Review of the implementation of NSF for Older People has not yet commenced. A comprehensive analysis from the first 18 months of implementation shows generally good progress is being made against the initial actions, targets and deadlines. The analysis is derived from an all-Wales database, the Self Assessment Audit Tool (SAAT), which provides an extensive set of data on the status of implementation by all local health boards, NHS Trusts and local authorities across all of the 10 NSF standards.

The timing of the Review is important as it needs to be taken forward to positively influence progress on implementation of the NSF but must not start too early so as to undermine progress nor be too late to give a clear direction for future development across Wales. This means an initial start will be made in 2008 using the 2007-8 results of the Self Assessment Audit Tool, combined with sample field work and related planned Inspection of Health and Social Care. The conclusions reached will then need to be taken on board by local partnerships and integrated into their implementation plans. This first stage will lead to a comprehensive stage of the Review which will be completed in 2009 to be able to set out recommendations that are taken into account in planning for 2010-2011 and beyond.

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister confirm when the bowel screening programme will be rolled out in South Wales West? (WAQ51551)

Edwina Hart: Full rollout of the bowel cancer screening programme will be phased, starting with 60 to 69 year olds, followed by 70 to 74 year olds and finally 50 to 59 year olds. Velindre NHS Trust aims to start roll out in October with invitations being issued across Wales which will include South West Wales.

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister make a statement on action take to encourage participation in the bowel screening programme? (WAQ51552)

Edwina Hart: Velindre NHS Trust is developing a comprehensive strategy to raise public awareness of and to promote participation in the bowel cancer screening programme, in consultation with potential user groups, healthcare professionals and the voluntary sector. It specifically addresses the need to engage men, as this is the first national screening programme to invite men, as well as addressing the traditionally 'hard to reach' groups such as the homeless and people with learning difficulties. The strategy will be implemented in earnest just ahead of the screening programme start date in October.

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister make a statement on the provision that is being made for equipment for the bowel screening programme? (WAQ51553)

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister make a statement on the plans to accredit an adequate number of colonoscopists for the bowel screening programme? (WAQ51554)

Edwina Hart: As part of the planning process, both staff training needs and equipment requirements are being taken into account. The Bowel Screening Steering Board has agreed a model of assessment and accreditation for screening colonoscopists in Wales, which will include an audit of colonoscopists' current practice. Potential screening colonoscopists will be nominated by their Trust and applications will be assessed by Bowel Screening Wales and accreditation arranged for selected colonoscopists. At the initial rollout stage, a total of 20 accredited colonoscopists will be required throughout Wales, with eight of these also accredited as assessors. Velindre NHS Trust, which will provide this service, is confident that this number of colonoscopists can be accredited within the timescale.

In terms of equipment, as part of the baseline review of colonoscopy services, carried out by the Bowel Screening Wales project team, Trusts were asked to provide details of colonoscopes currently in use, their age and their planned replacement dates. No issues with out of date, or unsuitable equipment were uncovered. The replacement of colonoscopes when required forms part of each Trust's risk assessed capital replacement plan. We would continue to expect clinicians to follow both extant national guidance and manufacturer's guidance on the decontamination of endoscopes. A sub-group of the All Wales Decontamination Group has recently been established under the leadership of Welsh Health Estates, to look at the whole area of infection control in relation to the use of endoscopes across all healthcare settings.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the process of appointing executive and non-executive directors to the new Local Health Boards? (WAQ51565)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the make-up of interviewing panels for the appointment of executive and non-executive directors to the new Local Health Boards? (WAQ51566)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the criteria used for appointing executive and non-executive directors to the new Local Health Boards? (WAQ51567)

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on delays in appointing executive and non-executive directors to the new Local Health Boards? (WAQ51568)

Edwina Hart: LHBs do not employ Executive and Non Executive Directors. Officers and non-Officers are appointed within LHBs. Currently, these appointments are a matter for the LHB Board. I cannot comment on future arrangements until I have received and considered the responses to the consultation.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement about where the administrative facilities for the new Local Health Boards will be located? (WAQ51569)

Edwina Hart: This is not a question I can answer until I have received and considered the responses to the consultation paper which was issued on 2 April 2008.

Janet Ryder (North Wales): Will the Minister confirm how many children and young people with autism in Wales have access to a key worker? (WAQ51587)

Edwina Hart: Information is not held centrally by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Janet Ryder (North Wales): Will the Minister confirm which local authorities in Wales are currently operating Key Working Schemes for children and young people and how they are operating these? (WAQ51588)

Janet Ryder (North Wales): What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to ensure that all children and young people with complex needs, including children with autism, have access to a key worker—as outlined in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services? (WAQ51589)

Edwina Hart: The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales is a 10-year strategy, which sets national standards to improve services and reduce variation in service delivery for children and young people in Wales. It is expected that key actions, which support the standards, will be implemented over the 10-year period.

A web based self-assessment audit tool (SAAT) has been developed for Local Authority Children and Young People's Partnerships to use in determining progress in implementing NSF actions. The SAAT data for 2006/07 shows that 18 out of 22 local authorities are now providing a key working service. At present, there is no uniform system of provision in place across Wales, as not all areas have the same agencies providing the service.

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (CELLS) has announced funding to support Care Co-ordination Network UK (CCNUK) to manage the recruitment, training and support structure for a number of additional transition key worker posts for children and young people with additional learning needs. This follows an announcement made by the Minister for CELLS in November 2007 of funding totalling £1.5million for the financial year 2008/09 to 2010/11 to provide the additional transition key workers.

Dai Lloyd (South Wales West): Will the Minister confirm that the forthcoming Autistic Spectrum Disorder action plan will address the difficulties adults with autism currently face in accessing services and support? (WAQ51590)

Edwina Hart: The draft Strategic Action Plan seeks to improve the commissioning and delivery of services to individuals of all ages on the Autistic Spectrum. Ultimately it is for local authorities and local health boards to assess the care needs of adults on the autistic spectrum and to provide services to address the assessed needs. I expect the final Strategic Action Plan to issue in the Spring.

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's policy on charges for medical certificates to SSAFA Forces Help? (WAQ51598)

Edwina Hart: GPs issue medical certificates for sickness benefit purposes under regulations set by the Department of Work and Pensions. I understand that in certain circumstances SSAFA Forces Help require a medical examination to confirm the client they are assisting will be able to use the equipment they intend to provide. A medical examination in these circumstances does not fall within a GPs NHS contract.