

# Bay Watch

14 July 2008



## About Bay Watch

*Bay Watch* is a weekly political briefing for Welsh NHS Confederation members that is focused on health issues and policies being discussed and debated in the National Assembly for Wales.

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## Last week at the Assembly

### First Minister's Questions

#### *The NHS 60*

The First Minister said that the building work on three new hospitals in Ebbw Vale, Mountain Ash and Ystrad Fawr, was a fitting way to celebrate the 60th anniversary, saying that 21st Century hospital design would put less emphasis on inpatient beds, and more on outpatient departments.

#### *Restructuring*

Asked whether the new structures would see politicians stepping back from the running of the health service, the First Minister said "*you cannot really have a stepping back*", adding that politicians will always be held accountable for the health service.

#### *Ambulance Response Times*

Rhodri Morgan stated that he "*strongly shares the concerns expressed by Edwina Hart*" about the ambulance service.

Read the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92182&ds=7/2008#rhif1>

For brief answers to questions not reached in plenary on care for the elderly and health investment in mid and west Wales, please see the following link:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92175&ds=7/2008>

### Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

#### *Improving emergency care*

Work is progressing on the DECS strategy, including the implementation of video conferencing technology.

#### *Support for stroke patients*

The Minister is developing a programme of action for the NHS and social services, which includes plans for more community based rehabilitation.

#### *Spending*

The Minister is "*extremely concerned*" about rising fuel and energy costs. She highlighted the ongoing need for the NHS to get the balance right between keeping hospitals running and warm, and providing services.

#### *LHB budgets*

Discussing the Local Health Boards' reported £34m underspend on their drugs budgets, the Minister said it was something the government monitors monthly and acknowledged that "*perhaps the overall allocation is not correct*".

### ***Social Services for children***

Deputy Minister, Gwenda Thomas, said she would pursue the Legislative Competence Order on vulnerable children, which would give increased powers to the government to improve the quality of children's social care.

### ***Specialist wheelchair assessors***

Edwina Hart has asked a task and finish group to develop a strategy for a "first-class service" for wheelchair users. She added that the current waiting time for an assessment is unacceptable.

### ***Deep Brain Stimulation***

The Health Minister will report back to the Assembly on future plans for funding deep brain stimulation after the summer, when a medical trial evaluation has been completed.

### ***Malnutrition***

Deputy Minister, Gwenda Thomas, said that food and drink in hospital should be given the same importance as medication. A task and finish group is developing a national nutritional campaign.

### ***Supporting carers***

£4m a year is provided in grants to local authorities. Gwenda Thomas said that the government will review its strategy for carers, acknowledging that "there are issues with regards to resources".

### ***CHCs***

Asked about the future of Community Health Councils, Edwina Hart said "there is no question of merging CHCs" and added that she would be looking to strengthen their roles in any reorganisation.

Read the transcript of the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92478&ds=7/2008#a1>

For answers to questions not reached in plenary on single sex hospital wards, neonatal care, making best practice normal practice and community hospitals, see the following link:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92458&ds=7/2008>

## **Alcohol abuse debate**

**Mark Isherwood** (North Wales, Conservative) highlighted a shortage of "dual diagnostic treatment" for people with mental health problems who are also substance misusers.

Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, **Jenny Randerson**, said that the government had failed to take a whole-system approach to dealing with the problem, which is linked with wider issues such as crime and poverty.

**Dr. Brian Gibbons**, Minister for Social Justice, said that WAG is developing a specific alcohol action plan with the National Public Health Service for Wales.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92478&ds=7/2008#a6>

## **Dementia debate**

**David Melding** (Conservative, South Wales Central) said there had been a decline in specialist services for people with dementia and called on the government to introduce a national strategy.

**Health Minister, Edwina Hart**, agreed that there was a need to bring together the different strands of dementia care work into one national plan and said that work would continue on providing more care for people in their own homes.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=92478&ds=7/2008#a7>

## Local Service Boards Inquiry

The transcript is now available for the session where the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee heard evidence from Local Service Boards in Cardiff and Carmarthenshire.

Read it in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-hwlg-home/bus-committees-third-hwlg-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=92040&ds=7/2008>

## This week at the Assembly

### First Minister's Questions

The Minister will answer questions on:

- improving patient services in South East Wales
- improving hospital hygiene in North Wales
- waiting times
- access to emergency services.

Read the list of questions in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-oral.htm?act=dis&id=91240&ds=7/2008>

### Statement on restructuring

In Wednesday's plenary session, the Minister for Health and Social Services will make a statement on the reconfiguration of health services in Wales.

For more details, see Wednesday's agenda here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=92401&ds=7/2008>

## Cross border services

The Conservative health spokesperson, Jonathan Morgan, has proposed a debate on the challenge of cross border health services, which will take place in plenary on Wednesday.

### Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

The committee will continue its inquiry into Local Service Boards, hearing evidence from Neath Port Talbot LSB and the Welsh Local Government Association.

See Thursday's agenda here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-hwlg-home/bus-committees-third-hwlg-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=92499&ds=7/2008>

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## About the Welsh NHS Confederation

The Welsh NHS Confederation represents the organisations making up the NHS in Wales: trusts and local health boards. We act as an independent voice in the drive for better health and better healthcare through our policy and influencing work, and by supporting members with events, information and training. To find out more about us go to -

[www.welshconfed.org](http://www.welshconfed.org)