

# Bay Watch

22 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

#### *Improving services in South East Wales*

The First Minister said that Edwina Hart was in contact with Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust, to seek action to improve an *"unacceptably low level of staffing"* in midwifery.

#### *Hospital hygiene*

A new programme to empower ward sisters and continued unannounced *"spot-checks"* by Health Inspectorate Wales were two ways cited by the First Minister to improve hospital hygiene. He added that the design of new hospitals, like the one being built in Blaenau Gwent, would help prevent the spread of infection in the future.

#### *Waiting times*

The First Minister gave a commitment to reaching the 26-week target by the end of December 2009 and maintaining the same level of performance thereafter.

#### *Emergency services*

Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, Jenny Randerson, asked the First Minister if he recognised that the Ambulance Trust would need extra funding to meet the challenging targets set by the Health Minister. Rhodri Morgan said he would ask Edwina Hart to respond.

Read the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=93189&ds=7/2008#rhif1>

### NHS Restructuring

Edwina Hart delivered a statement in which she outlined responses to restructuring proposals. Most responses were in support of reducing the number of LHBs, although many pointed out that their work on localism must not be lost.

The Minister said there was a widespread approval of the idea of a national board, and a *"strong consensus"* that seven single organisations should be created, combining the responsibilities of Trusts and LHBs.

Conservative health spokesperson, Jonathan Morgan, called it a *"substantial u-turn"* from the Health Minister and said that it was a return to a pre 1990s model.

Plaid Cymru AM, Helen Mary Jones, raised concerns that larger organisations would lose the good relationships that have been built up between health and social services.

Jenny Randerson questioned whether the national board would operate at arm's length from the government and be made accountable for its own decisions.

Read the statement and discussion in full here:  
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=93734&ds=7/2008#a4>

### Cross border health services

The Conservatives hosted a debate on cross border health services, in response to a report issued by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee.

Conservative health spokesperson, Jonathan Morgan, claimed that the gap between the 18 week and 26 week target in England and Wales is resulting in Welsh patients being given less priority than English patients.

Angela Burns (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, Conservative) said there should be *“a better level of trust between England and Wales”* so that English Trusts know Wales will *“honour the debt”* when they treat Welsh patients.

Health Minister Edwina Hart said that the subject of cross border services *“has a tendency to generate more heat than light”* and that to the majority of patients, the border is invisible. She added that progress has been made in areas where there have been *“strains on managerial arrangements”*.

Read the Welsh Affairs Committee Report here:  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmwelaf/870/870.pdf>

And the debate from the Senedd here:  
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=93734&ds=7/2008#a16>

### Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

The transcript is now available for session in which Welsh Assembly Government representatives gave evidence for the Committee’s inquiry into Local Service Boards. Carys Evans, Head of Local Service Board Development, said there has been *“real engagement from the police, the voluntary sector, the NHS and the local authorities, and they all feel that this [Local Service Boards] could be really relevant and useful to them.”*

Read the transcript 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=93808&ds=7/2008>

**Due to Summer Recess, Bay Watch will return on 22 September. If there are any important political announcements in the meantime, we will keep our members informed with Bay Watch e-mail alerts.**

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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)