

Bay Watch

10 November 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

In response to a question on waiting times for counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy, the First Minister said information for non consultant-led therapy was not held centrally by the government. Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Mike German, asked the Minister to ensure these waiting times were recorded, as third sector organisations had highlighted there could be problems in accessing these services.

Read First Minister's questions in full here:
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=104521&ds=11/2008#3>

Breast cancer services debate

The Conservatives called on the Welsh Assembly Government to make greater provision specialist breast cancer services. Jonathan Morgan highlighted recommendations from a Breast Cancer Care report and also asked the Minister to respond to yesterday's announcement on the issue of co-payments, and what impact it would have in Wales.

Jenny Randerson supported Mr Morgan's comments and said co-payments, *"must be a reasonable way ahead on this issue"*.

Edwina Hart responded by saying she will look in detail at the announcement in England, and would come back to the Chamber *"if there are any issues that I need to bring to Members' attention"*.

Read the debate in full here:
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=104741&ds=11/2008#5>

Short debate: Who is really paying for the NHS?

Angela Burns (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, Conservative) claimed that *"it is more than just the taxpayer"* paying for the NHS, arguing that patients pay too much for the NHS. She highlighted the problems of wasted medicines, *"gimmicks"* such as free parking, *"health tourism"*, restructuring costs, and argued that it is the patient who pays for all of these things. She also called on the Assembly Government to follow the announcement made by Alan Johnson on allowing patient to pay for top-up drugs.

Jenny Randerson endorsed the point about gimmicks and said that the government should be concentrating on core services.

Edwina Hart responded by saying: *"Angela's contribution today illustrated for me why the NHS would never be safe in Tory hands. The principle that it will be there for you at the time of your greatest need without*

the need to worry about cost and affordability is one that is still worth fighting for in this century, keeping true to the ethos of the NHS."

The Minister said she would look into the issue of new drugs and treatments but reiterated that free prescriptions *"is a policy that will not change"*. She added that the money Trusts have lost through abolishing parking charges *"was absolutely negligible in terms of the whole NHS budget"*.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=104741&ds=11/2008#6>

Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

The committee has published a letter from its chair, Jonathan Morgan, to the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding evidence given by the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust. In the letter, the committee calls on the Minister to allow the Trust's management to take forward improvements *"in an atmosphere based on partnership, rather than blame"*.

Read the letter 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=104145&ds=11/2008>

This week at the Assembly

NHS Reform update

In Tuesday's plenary, the Minister for Health and Social Services will update members on the NHS Reforms, where she is expected to give more details on finance and performance management arrangements for the new organisations. She will also give a statement on the Dental Review Consultation Report.

See Tuesday's agenda in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=104399&ds=11/2008>

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

In Wednesday's plenary session, the Minister will be asked to answer questions on:

- Health advice services
- Palliative care for neurological conditions
- Financial support for independent hospices
- Improving efficiency of the ambulance service
- Criteria for IVF treatment
- Health issues in rural areas
- Foot care
- Cancer services
- Children being treated in adult psychiatric wards
- Prescribing by nurses and pharmacists
- Health tourism
- Social services in Denbighshire
- North Wales patients being treated in south Wales or England
- Stroke services
- Emergency healthcare in rural Wales

See the list of questions in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-oral.htm?act=dis&id=103329&ds=11/2008>

Public Service Ombudsman

Also on Wednesday is a debate on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report 2007/08. The report contains details of complaints against the NHS upheld by the Ombudsman.

View the Ombudsman's annual report here
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-doc-laid.htm?act=dis&id=86950&ds=6/2008>

Home Oxygen Therapy Services

The Audit Committee will meet on Thursday to consider the Wales Audit Office report on Home Oxygen Therapy Services. They will hear evidence from Ann Lloyd, Head of Health and Social Services, and Geoff Lang, Chief Executive of Wrexham Local Health Board.

See Thursday's agenda here:
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-ac-home/bus-committees-third-ac-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=104360&ds=11/2008>

Papers for the meeting, including the Audit Office's report and the Welsh Assembly Government's response, are available here:
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-ac-home/bus-committees-third-ac-agendas.htm?ds=11/2008>

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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