

Bay Watch

12 May 2009



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

Questions to the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery

Jonathan Morgan questioned the Minister on efficiency savings being made by Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, asking "When will you be honest with our doctors and nurses about the impact that these cuts will have on services?" The Minister responded by saying that savings will be an "increasing challenge, irrespective of which part of the public sector we are operating in."

Read the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=128067&ds=5/2009#1>

Update on swine flu

The Health Minister gave an update on the latest situation regarding swine flu, outlining the main features of the virus in Wales to date:

- There is not yet sustained person-to-person transmission within the community.
- Agencies are preparing for a potential further wave of the virus in the autumn and winter.
- There is a central stockpile of facemasks and respirators that can be deployed if needed.

Read the statement in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=128067&ds=5/2009#3>

Cross-border public services

The Conservatives called for permanent protocols to be set up to maintain access to cross-border services. They referred to the recent Welsh Affairs Committee report that concluded there was a lack of communication between WAG and the Department of Health, with negotiations being carried out on an ad-hoc basis. Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, Peter Black, said that the Department of Health were blaming the restructuring of the Welsh NHS for the delay in setting up a permanent protocol.

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery, Andrew Davies, said that the Conservatives had overstated the case. He pointed out that evidence in the Welsh Affairs Committee report is largely anecdotal, and research is lacking. The Minister added that Edwina Hart has extended the protocol with the Department of Health for another two years.

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=128067&ds=5/2009#6>

Stroke treatment

The Conservatives claimed that Welsh patients are receiving a lower standard of care than those in the rest of the UK. They outlined nine key indicators which show that care in Wales lags behind care in England. Less than half the hospitals in Wales have a dedicated stroke unit, compared to 96% in England, said Andrew RT Davies.

In response, the Health Minister said she shared the concerns raised by AMs and would be raising certain points with officials. She said that an enormous amount of work was being done to improve stroke services, but “they will not be transformed overnight”. She added: “I am not prepared to give out money unless there are viable plans that will actually deliver services for people.”

Read the debate in full here

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=128067&ds=5/2009#7>

Community care

In a short debate on community mental health care, Janet Ryder (North Wales, Plaid Cymru) called on the Assembly to develop a more holistic approach to mental health services. She said there is need to:

- move away from the trend of prescribing drugs, which has put Wales at the top of the table for prescribing anti-depressants;
- change the managerial culture of the NHS away from being target-driven;
- involve patients in decision making about their own care.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=128067&ds=5/2009#9>

Ambulance services

The Health Minister, Edwina Hart, issued a written statement outlining improvements in ambulance response times. She outlined a number of “barriers that have been removed” to improve performance, such as strengthening leadership and management and purchasing the Automatic Vehicle Location System.

Read the statement in full here:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/newsitem.cfm?contentid=12018>

Written questions

The Health Minister has issued written responses to questions on the following subjects:

Free prescription policy, community hospitals in Powys, freezing of physiotherapy posts
<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-written.htm?act=dis&id=127822&ds=5/2009#3>

This Week at the Assembly

Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

The committee will hold a scrutiny session with the Minister for Health and Social Services, Edwina Hart, who will also be giving evidence as part of the committee’s inquiry into community mental health services.

See more details in Thursday’s agenda:

<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=127765&ds=5/2009>

A paper accompanying the ministerial scrutiny session is available 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=128085&ds=5/2009>

The Minister's written evidence on community mental health care is available 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=128086&ds=5/2009>

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee will discuss NHS progress towards the European Working Time Directive, and will receive a briefing from the Auditor General, Jeremy Colman.

See more details in Thursday's agenda:

<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=128116&ds=5/2009>

Read the Wales Audit Office report here

<http://www.assemblywales.org/gen-ld7442-e.pdf>

In plenary this week:

Tuesday

The Minister for Health and Social Services

will make a statement on the Community Health Councils consultation.

The First Minister will respond to questions on patients' experiences of the NHS in Wales, and services for neuromuscular diseases.

See Tuesday's full agenda:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=127580&ds=5/2009>

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=127919&ds=5/2009>

Wednesday

The Minister for Health and Social Services will give AMs an update on swine flu.

See Wednesday's full agenda here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=127919&ds=5/2009>

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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