

Bay Watch

26 October 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

Finance Committee

Paul Davies, Finance Director of Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, and David Lewis, Finance Director of Cwm Taf Local Health Board, gave evidence to the finance committee on behalf of NHS Wales Finance Directors.

During the session, they explained that the 2.6% uplift in the health and social services draft budget would be taken up by the 2.7% health inflation rate. Additional significant costs to the NHS, including the cost of Continuing Healthcare, high cost drugs, sustaining Access 2009 targets, and new policy implementation, would create a 5% shortfall in funding.

He added that the new NHS structures were best placed to be able to deal with the current challenges, but called for transformational change in the way services are delivered to make best use of the NHS budget. Currently, 20% of the budget is not being used appropriately and could be used better if it were re-applied to out-of-hospital care, he added.

Mr Davies emphasised the need for the NHS to respond in a positive, constructive way by fostering greater clinical engagement, and building stronger partnerships with local government.

The full transcript is not yet available, but the Finance Directors' written evidence is available here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-fin-home/bus-committees-third-fin-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=147617&ds=10/2009>

First Minister's Questions

Ambulance debt

The Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, Peter Black, questioned whether the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust would have its debt written-off. The First Minister responded by saying: "The question is at what stage an improvement in performance by the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust would be sufficient to earn the right to debt relief."

Paying for care

The Welsh Assembly Government's Green Paper on paying for care will come out in November, with a 12-week consultation period. The First Minister said he was confident the Welsh Green Paper would be "far better" than the English Green Paper because of a report by the Institute for Public Policy Research, which found that Wales' approach was "the most coherent long-term commitment to improving the position of older people of any administration in the United Kingdom in the last decade."

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=148570&ds=10/2009#1>

Safeguarding Children

Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas, presented the reports on safeguarding children by the Care Standards and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW). She welcomed significant improvements made by local authorities and effective joint working between agencies in responding to initial concerns. However, she expressed concerns about the level of variation in NHS and local authority performance and said that joint working beyond referral was “not embedded firmly enough”, adding that too much currently falls to social services.

Read the statement in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=148570&ds=10/2009#3>

Questions to Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Drug treatment services

The Minister said that the draft budget adds an extra £5.9 million to the substance misuse action fund, bringing the annual budget for 2010-11 to £34.5 million.

The Minister issued a written answer to a question on joint working between emergency services, available here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=148994&ds=10/2009>

Healthy Eating in Schools Measure

The Healthy Eating in School (Wales) Measure 2009,

proposed by Jenny Randerson AM, received Royal Approval. The new measure imposes limits in the amounts of fat, salt and sugar allowed in school meals and drinks.

More details on the measure are available here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-legislation/bus-leg-measures/bus-legislation-measures.htm>

Press releases issued

Expansion of ‘Designed to Smile’ across Wales

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/health/2009/091023designedtosmile/?lang=en>

New equipment for Welsh hospitals to help care for patients with swine flu

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/health/2009/091022swineflu/?lang=en>

Innovative new teaching pack for children with low vision

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/health/2009/091022teachingpack/?lang=en>

Health Minister announces funding for extra surgical theatres in north Wales

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/health/2009/091022theatres/?lang=en>

Swine flu vaccination programme begins

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/health/2009/091021vaccination/?lang=en>

There is no business to report for this week due to the half-term recess.

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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

