

Bay Watch

29 June 2010



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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This Week at the Assembly

Tuesday

Children and Young People Committee

The committee will carry out a follow-up of its inquiry into advocacy services for children and young people.

Plenary

The First Minister will be asked to comment on the performance of the ambulance service, support for cancer patients and the future of Fairwood Hospital.

The Minister for Health and Social Services will make a statement on osteoporosis.

The Minister for Business and Budget will make a statement on the Efficiency and Innovation Board.

Last Week at the Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

The committee heard evidence from representatives of NHS Wales on how health is meeting the

challenge of Welsh public sector finance. NHS Wales chief executive, Paul Williams, and the chief executive of Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, Jan Williams, discussed how the NHS is modernising services and collaborating with public sector partners to improve quality and efficiency. Examples included:

- Sharing capital assets with public sector partners, such as co-located health and social care locality teams
- Community services helping to maintain independence, avoid hospital admission, and reduce lengths of stay
- A focus on quality and safety being driven by the 1000 Lives Campaign resulting in improved efficiency
- A reduction in management costs brought about by NHS restructuring
- Working with the third sector to find ways of maintaining independence of frail elderly people.

The transcript of the session is not yet available but a video archive is available at www.senedd.tv

First Minister's Questions

Violence and aggression against NHS staff

The First Minister urged local health boards to "ensure that they do not hold back on reporting and prosecution when violence is conducted against

members of staff.”

Neuromuscular services

The Minister for Health and Social Services has written to the chairs of the health boards in Wales in support of the recommendations of the James Steers review. The First Minister added: “It is essential that local health boards realise their responsibility to ensure the standards that they have been provided with are met.”

Improving public health

A tobacco control action plan is being developed by the autumn, which will advise on the affect of children and young people’s exposure to tobacco smoke in private cars.

Read the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=187920&ds=6/2010#1>

Improving the availability of medicines

The Minister for Health and Social Services announced the publication of an interim report on progress implementing the recommendations of the 2009 Routledge Report, “Improving the Availability of Medicines for Patients in Wales.” The Minister summarised the main points of the report, which include:

- the need for clear guidance on the clinical and cost effectiveness of all new medicines
- the need for robust procedures to consider individual requests for treatment
- the need for additional training to help health professionals communicate more effectively with patients
- the need to agree the core principles of patient access schemes that allow “more ready access” to appropriate new and innovative medicines.

On the issue of co-payments, the Minister said: “In the rare instance that a clinician might advise non-funded treatments on clinical grounds, the right of a patient to choose to fund such a drug has to be

respected.”

Read the statement and debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=187920&ds=6/2010#5>

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

The Minister responded to questions on the following topics:

Palliative care

The Minister will share the outcomes of the informal Viv Sugar review of the palliative care implementation board “in due course.”

Supporting army veterans

Public Health Wales is conducting a needs assessment to support the planning of specialist services for veterans over the next five years, which is due for completion by the end of August. Professor Jonathan Bisson is also leading a project that is due to report to the Minister in October.

Homecare services in Welsh

The Welsh Language Task Group has been set up to develop frontline services through the medium of Welsh. The Deputy Minister for Social Services reminded plenary that every public body is subject to its own Welsh language scheme.

One Wales health commitments

The Minister said that over half of the One Wales commitments on health and social services have been met, and “we are on target to deliver the remaining commitments by 2011”.

McKinsey Report

The Health Minister is “delighted” by the level of interest in the work that McKinsey has undertaken for the Welsh Assembly Government and the NHS. The Minister added “It might be useful for me to issue a written statement on this issue, given the level of interest, to inform Members of progress in this area”.

Budget

In light of growing pressure on public finances, the Minister said there was a need to prepare “proactively” as increasingly tight budget settlements impact on jobs and services.

Cross-border services

The Minister promised to look into the issue of travel costs for patients in Powys travelling across the border for treatment in Herefordshire and Shropshire.

Shortage of midwives

123 training places have been commissioned in 2010, an increase from 110 in 2009 and 95 in 2008.

Bowel screening

The Minister expressed her disappointment with the uptake figure for screening in Wales of 58.5% and said there was a need to raise awareness of the symptoms among the general public.

Read the session in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=188210&ds=6/2010#1>

Stroke services debate

Chair of the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee, Darren Millar, summarised the principle recommendations of the committee’s inquiry into stroke services in Wales, which include:

- All patients in Wales should have access to a specialist stroke unit, staffed by multidisciplinary teams.
- The practice of admitting stroke patients to general wards should be phased out as a matter of urgency.
- A stroke register should be developed to record the number of people who have suffered a stroke in Wales.
- The government should develop an all-Wales stroke strategy.

The Minister welcomed the “excellent” report. She

recognised that stroke services in Wales “are not as good as we would wish”. She added that much work has been undertaken in the past 18 months to improve service provision and to provide better patient outcomes.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=188210&ds=6/2010#5>

Diabetes debate

Conservative health spokesperson, Andrew RT Davies, called upon the Assembly Government to conduct a review of local health board provision of diabetes services. He said that some LHBs do not have a “joined-up approach and structure in place” to provide services for screening and education in the community. He highlighted the example of Scotland, where there is an IT package linking primary care, the secondary sector and the patient.

In response, the Minister said there had been some good achievements in diabetes care but said there were areas for development and improvement. Ms Hart is considering replacing the old local diabetes service advisory group, which reflected the 22 LHB planning structures, with seven LHB diabetes planning and delivery groups to “give more focus”. These groups would take responsibility for leading, managing and reporting progress on the NSF.

Read the debate in full here:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=188210&ds=6/2010#9>

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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