

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY

1. Introduction

1.1 The Health and Social Services Committee is one of the Assembly's six subject committees. This report is made under Standing Order 9.9, which requires subject committees to report to the Assembly from time to time on their progress in fulfilling their forward work programme.

1.2 Kirsty Williams chairs the Committee. The other members are Jane Hutt, the Assembly Secretary, Brian Gibbons, Lynne Neagle, Gwenda Thomas, David Lloyd, Geraint Davies, Helen Mary Jones, David Melding and Peter Rogers. Peter Rogers replaced Nicholas Bourne in September 1999.

1.3 By the end of February the Committee had met 17 times.

2. The Committee's Remit

2.1 The Committee has a large portfolio covering the full range of health and social services issues for which the Assembly Secretary is responsible. These issues are key to the wellbeing of the people of Wales and the Committee's work has a high public profile.

3. Method of Working

3.1 All the meetings of the Committee have been held in public. From the outset the Committee was keen to work with the statutory and voluntary agencies working in the Health and Social Services fields.

3.2. Many key organisations were invited to meet the Committee and discuss their views on the major challenges and issues that need to be resolved in the next two to three years, and the main priorities that the Committee should address in the next 12 months. These organisations included:

NHS Confederation, Wales;

Welsh Local Government Association;

Association of Directors of Social Services;

Association of Community Health Councils;

Unions and professional bodies;

Wales Council for Voluntary Action; and

British Dental Association Wales, and the Welsh Dental Committee.

3.3 The Committee also met the Chair and Chief Executive of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, and the Chair and Director of the Commission for Health Improvement.

3.4 The Committee is committed to continuing to work alongside these organisations to secure the best possible services for the people of Wales.

4. The Committee's Priorities

4.1 The committee identified the following priorities in drafting its initial work programme:

- **Joined up working** - The integration of health, health services and social care is the key objective in the Committee's programme of work. It will therefore be focussing on the NHS and Social Services White Papers and "Better Health - Better Wales" in its forward work programme.
- **Improving health and tackling inequalities** - addressing the "big picture" of tackling health inequalities and the detriments of ill-health will require scrutiny by the committee of all its deliberations and also of the wider Assembly policy arena for promoting and improving health.
- **Primary care** - a realignment of NHS priorities in the form of a strategy for primary care (health and social), including its contribution to social exclusion and community developments.
- **Quality/Regulation/Inspection** - Running through all policy developments and budgetary considerations are the requirements (statutory and discretionary) for maximising quality, value for money, "evidence based" service delivery, regulation and inspection of services for vulnerable people.
- **Budgeting** - early consideration of the NHS stocktake; the development of spending priorities across NHS and Social Services.
- **Children** - in the form of sessions by the committee on an independent Children's Commissioner and action on the North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal report; children service plans; and the development of a child and adolescent mental health strategy.
- **Urgent policy and operational issues** - notably waiting lists/times, emergency admissions, hospital discharge, health/social care flexibility, public appointments and millennium date change.
- **Accessibility and Partnership** - The Committee is making itself accessible to as wide a range of

interested groups, partners and organisations so that it is open to information, ideas and influence.

5. Progress

5.1 The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders :

"9.7. Each subject committee shall

- i. contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;
- ii. keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- iii. keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- i. advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22;
- ii. provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;
- iii. perform its function under Standing Order 21(complaints);
- iv. perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
- v. consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."

5.2 To date the Committee has discussed a wide range of issues reflecting the breadth of its portfolio. This work has mainly contributed to the development of policy and the monitoring of progress in important areas. It is evidence of the way it is working with the various sectors to achieve common objectives of better, more cost effective services that meet the public need. Details of the major work done are provided in Annex 1

Children's Commissioner

5.3 One of the most significant pieces of work the Committee has undertaken is on the proposal for an Independent Children's Commissioner. As well as undertaking written consultation in October, the Committee will have received oral submissions from:

Children in Wales;

NSPCC Cymru;

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health;

Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association;

Welsh Administration Ombudsman and Health Service Commissioner;

Commissioner for Local Administration in Wales;

Iechyd Morgannwg Health;

North West Wales NHS Trust;

Voices from Care;

Association of Directors of Social Services;

Welsh Local Government Association; and

Barnardos.

In January a group of members visited the Sandfields Family Centre in Port Talbot to discuss proposals with front line workers and clients, and members have also talked to people in their constituency.

Waterhouse Report

5.4. The Committee has taken the lead in the National Assembly for Wales's response to the Waterhouse Report. Following a statement by the Assembly Secretary, the Committee held a full debate and approved the action plan. It also concluded that:

- Local Authority deployment of resources identified by the Assembly for Children's services should be monitored. The Committee recognised the need to keep the level of resources available to Local Authorities under review.
- The priorities were agreed to be:
 - the training and development of staff at all levels;
 - the early implementation of recommendation no 9; and
 - strengthening recommendation 11 with a shorter maximum period for visits by field social

workers;

securing effective inter-agency working.

5.5 In its discussion of the budget for 2000-2001, the Committee resolved by a majority of six to four to advise the Assembly Secretary that the budget for Health and Social Services in Wales was inadequate; and to advise her within the Cabinet to seek additional funding for health and social services in Wales.

5.6 The Committee acknowledged that the budget did provide additional money, even though the Committee's priorities were not all met in full.

5.7 The Committee's budget priorities have included the following:

The examination of the benefits and costs of extending the groups of people entitled to free eye tests.

5.8 Written submissions on the issue will be considered, and on 2 March the Committee received oral submissions from:

The National Screening Policy Team;

Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians;

Association of Optometrists, Welsh Council;

Welsh Optometric Committee;

Royal National Institute for the Blind;

Wales Council for the Blind; and

Welsh Health Authorities.

Task and Finish Group on Prescribing

5.9 The Committee has been instrumental in the establishment of task and finish groups looking at prescribing practices. This was a result of the Committee's consideration of the report on the NHS Stocktake

Carers' Strategy

5.10 There was all-party agreement that addressing the support needs of carers was a priority, and that

all subject committees had a degree of interest. In October the Committee received a presentation from the Wales Carers' Alliance and this informed its contribution to the development of the Carers' Strategy and the proposals for the deployment of funding for carers in Wales. The support for the Carers' Strategy as a major priority was reflected in the Committee's budget planning priorities.

Waiting Times and Clinical Priorities Group

5.11 The Committee was also instrumental in setting up a working group on waiting times and clinical priorities, following all party approval of moving toward a clinical priorities and waiting times focus on management.

Formula Review

5.12 It has also initiated a review of the most appropriate means of allocating available resources to fund the provision of the full range of primary, community, secondary, and tertiary health services to the population of Wales in order to promote equitable access to appropriate quality health services in accordance with health need.

Primary Care Strategy

5.13 The Committee received a presentation from members of a working group drawn from the health service who had been involved in drawing up the strategy, and discussed how the strategy might be taken forward .

6. The Future Programme

6.1 At the beginning of the year the Chair, Assembly Secretary and spokespersons for the other political parties reviewed the way in which the Committee was working. They concluded that in its first six months the Committee had achieved a fruitful dialogue with the key players involved in the delivery of health and social services and care. It had also addressed and influenced a number of important subjects, achieving a broad level of consensus in a number of important policy areas. The group agreed that the way forward was for the Committee to concentrate on key strategic issues and on its role of scrutiny. Its forward work programme from May 2000 would reflect this approach and take account of the issues identified in the draft "Better Wales" for early action by the Assembly.

6.2 The Committee proposes to scrutinise the performance of two health authorities and two NHS trusts between May 2000 and December 2001.

6.3 The Committee will also receive reports on the working groups on waiting times / waiting lists and prescribing practices and consider their conclusions.

6.4 The draft forward work programme is at Annex 2

Kirsty Williams

Chair

28 March 2000

ANNEX 1

	Policy Development	Scrutiny	Monitoring
Joined Up Working	<p>In September the Committee discussed proposals for implementing the increased flexibilities between health and local authorities that had been opened up by the Health Act 1999. Joined up working impacts on a number of other issues considered by the Committee, such as relieving pressures on hospital beds and the Carers' Strategy.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the proposals for a National Carers' Strategy in November, informed by an earlier discussion with the Wales Carers Alliance. The Committee's recommendations have been taken into account in the drafting of the strategy. It will be issued for consultation in the Spring and has been drawn to the attention of other subject committees.</p>		

<p>Improving Health and Tackling Inequalities</p>	<p>The Committee has been able to comment on and influence a number of important strategies, such as</p> <p>the NHS Corporate Strategy;</p> <p>the Sexual Health Strategy; Adult Mental Health Strategy; and</p> <p>the Child and Adolescent Health Strategy</p> <p>The Committee initiated consultation on the costs and benefits of extending the groups of people entitled to free eye tests and has discussed the issue with appropriate organisations. It will discuss its findings and conclusions in March</p>		<p>The committee was instrumental in the establishment of task forces to look at the related issues of waiting times for hospital treatment and pressures on hospital beds during periods of increased demand for emergency admissions. The committee will monitor the progress of these groups and discuss their recommendations.</p>
<p>Primary Care</p>	<p>In October the Committee discussed the outcome of early consultation on the proposals for a Primary Care Strategy. The Committee will monitor progress in developing the strategy and will wish to be involved in further discussions as it is developed</p>		
<p>Quality / Regulation / Inspection</p>	<p>This is at the heart of most of the Committee's work. In particular the Committee's views on the structure and scope of the new regulatory arrangements for care standards, and the establishment of the Commission for Care Standards in Wales were reported to the Government in Westminster and taken account of in the drafting of primary legislation. The Bill is currently before Parliament.</p>		

<p>Budgets</p>	<p>The Committee resolved to look at the formula for allocating discretionary revenue funding for Hospital and Community and Family Health Services and cash limited General Medical Services. This will be done by an expert working group with an independently chaired steering group on which the four political parties will be represented.</p>	<p>The committee's discussion of the NHS Stocktake report and the budget proposals for 2000-2001 led to the setting up of a task group to examine prescribing practices in Wales, because of concern at the drugs bill.</p>	
<p>Children</p>	<p>The Committee considers the early establishment of an Independent Children's Commissioner for Wales to be one of its top priorities. All political parties are committed to the principle. The Committee has already had preliminary discussions with some of the voluntary organisations concerned with Children's Welfare in Wales and undertaken a public consultation exercise. The Committee will be receiving further oral presentations in March and will report its conclusions and recommendations to the Assembly soon afterwards.</p> <p>The Committee was able to comment on the outcome of consultation on proposals for legislation that would support young people leaving care. The Committee's recommendations were relayed by the Assembly Secretary to the Government in Westminster through the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales. The Bill is currently before Parliament.</p>		

<p>Urgent policy and Operational Issues</p>		<p>The Assembly Secretary's monthly reports have kept members up to date on issues. She has also provided ad hoc reports on urgent matters such as the siege at Withybush Hospital, Haverfordwest and the incident in January at Prince Phillip Hospital, Llanelli.</p>	<p>As reported above the Committee has been able to discuss urgent operational issues such as additional pressures on hospital beds. It was also able to monitor the arrangements to ensure that health and social services were ready for the Millennium.</p>
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ANNEX 2

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

DRAFT FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

May 2000 to December 2001

Duties of the Committee

The Health and Social Services Committee is one of six subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders :

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- i. contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;
- ii. keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- iii. keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- i. advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22;
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- iv. perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
- v. consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."

Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

For details of the Committee members click [here](#) *[insert hyperlink]*

The Committee's Aims and Objectives

The integration of health, health services and social care is the key objective in the committee's forward work programme. The programme addresses the major issues of tackling health inequalities and the detriments of ill health. The Committee will ensure that in reviewing and developing policy it will be making recommendations that will lead to high quality, value for money services. It will also want to be satisfied that services are properly regulated and inspected, especially those for vulnerable people.

The Statutory Schemes

The Committee will also take account of the National Assembly's statutory schemes for relations with the local authorities and the voluntary sector, and the sustainable development scheme.

This ethos conforms to the principles of "Better Wales", the National Assembly for Wales's *[draft]* strategic plan.

The Committee's Priorities

Chapter 6 of "Better Wales" *[draft]* sets out a number of issues for early action by the Assembly. The Committee will play a major role in progressing these.

- **A children's commissioner for Wales.** The Committee has undertaken extensive consultation on the remit and role of a children's commissioner and will be considering how the proposals should be implemented.
- **Health Improvement Programmes.** It will monitor the development and implementation of these programmes.
- **Hospital waiting times.** The Committee will be closely involved in steering and monitoring the work of the expert task groups on hospital waiting times and pressures on the NHS.
- **Fairer funding arrangements for the NHS.** The Committee has commissioned a review of the NHS resource allocation formula. It will monitor the review and discuss and make recommendations on its findings.
- **Greater protection for those in care.** The Committee will advise on the establishment of the Care Standards Commission for Wales proposed in the Care Standards Bill and the

implementation of the Children (Leaving Care) Bill.

- **A new approach to primary care.** It will continue to advise on the development of the primary care strategy.
- **A new community-led approach to health which tackles health inequalities.** The Committee will monitor the progress of Local Health Groups, and following a resolution in plenary, will examine the case for health action zones.
- **A Carer's Strategy for Wales.** It will continue to monitor and advise on the development of a Carers' Strategy.
- **A renewed capital programme.** The Committee wishes to be involved in early discussions on the capital programme.

ANNEX 2

DRAFT FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME May 2000 to July 2000

10.5.00	Assembly Secretary's monthly report	45	
	Report of Review of Acute Services	90	
	Waiting times Strategy - interim report	35	
	Joint Priorities guidance - outcome on Consultation	nil	Paper to note
	Minutes	5	
	Total time	175	
Thursday 18 May	Visit to BT Telemedicine Centre	120	Additional Session
24.05.00	Update on Corporate Strategy / Primary Care Strategy	90	
	Health Action Zones	30	
	Prescribing Practices - Interim Report	45	
	Minutes	5	

	Total time	170	
14.06.00	Assembly Secretary 's monthly report	45	
	Cancer Services	60	
	2001-2002 Budgets - Initial Consideration of Priorities	65	
	minutes	5	
	Total time	175	
<u>Thursday</u> 22 June	Informal Briefing	120	Additional Session
<u>28 June</u>	Scrutiny of Dyfed Powys HA - Initial Submissions from the HA	90	
	Task Force on Hospital Pressures	40	
	Review of Resource Allocations to HAs - interim report	40	
	minutes	5	
	Total time	175	
<u>12 July</u>	Undergraduate Medical Education - Swansea Campus for the Welsh School of Medicine	90	
	2001-2002 Budgets - Final Consideration of Priorities	60	
	minutes	5	
	Total time	155	

Other Issues

During the course of the programme the Committee also plans to

- review the performance of [*two health authorities and two NHS trusts*] (Standing Order 9.7(iii));
- consider proposals for the Assembly's budget (Standing Order 9.8 (ii));
- receive monthly reports from the Assembly Secretary;
- monitor the work of the task group on prescribing practices and report to the Assembly on the task group's findings;
- report on the potential for developing telemedicine
- consider the health benefits of fluoridation of water supplies