

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 02/03/2011

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Domestic Abuse

9. Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister make a statement about support for children and young people affected by domestic abuse. OAQ(3)1521(SJL)

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Carl Sargeant): I am committed to supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse. The Welsh Assembly Government has committed £276,825 to fund one co-ordinator and eight children's workers across Wales. This project is called Children Matter and is provided by Welsh Women's Aid.

Priorities for Local Government

10. Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on his priorities for local government for the remainder of this Assembly. OAQ(3)1513(SJL)

Carl Sargeant: My priorities are to secure the approval of the National Assembly to the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure, which will enable the structures and operation of local government in Wales to be strengthened and also to work with partners and stakeholders to support local authorities in the delivery of services.

Local Government Settlement

11. Leanne Wood: Will the Minister make a statement on the local government settlement. OAQ(3)1517(SJL)

Carl Sargeant: The final local government settlement was announced on 2 February. For 2011-12, local authorities will receive over £4.008 billion to fund core services. The National Assembly debated and approved the settlement on 15 February.

Support for Veterans

12. Eleanor Burnham: What discussions has the Minister had with the UK Government regarding integrated support for veterans in Wales. OAQ(3)1529(SJL)

Carl Sargeant: The Ministry of Defence is represented on my expert group on armed forces which met in November 2010. I have written to the UK Government, on the community covenant in the Armed Forces Bill. My officials work closely with the MOD on these matters.

Political Balance

13. Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the political balance of local authority scrutiny committees. OAQ(3)1536(SJL)

Carl Sargeant: Scrutiny committees, in the same way as other council committees, are required to reflect the political balance of the council. The proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure will bring a similar requirement to the allocation of chairs of committees.

Question 14 OAQ(3)1546(SJL) was withdrawn

Priorities

15. Darren Millar: Will the Minister make a statement on his priorities for North Wales for the remainder of the Third Assembly. OAQ(3)1538(SJL)

Carl Sargeant: I will continue to promote safe, sustainable and fair communities while protecting core services and the most vulnerable people in north Wales and across the country. A review of local authority services is under way and the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure will strengthen the operation of local government.

Questions to the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Apprenticeship Policy and Delivery

10. Leanne Wood: Will the Minister make a statement on apprenticeship policy and delivery. OAQ(3)1684(CEL)

The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning (Leighton Andrews): We introduced a range of measures to maintain apprenticeship opportunities during the economic downturn. These measures are supporting individuals now, plus ensuring that, as the economy recovers and we implement our economic renewal programme, we have the people with the right skills in place for a more rapid recovery.

Welsh-Medium Education

11. Paul Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh-medium education in Wales. OAQ(3)1669(CEL)

Leighton Andrews: The Welsh-medium education strategy and accompanying implementation programme set out the Assembly Government's plans to develop high-quality Welsh-medium provision across all phases of education and training. I am fully committed to ensuring that we continue to build upon the progress already being made to implement the strategy effectively.

Priorities

12. Mohammad Asghar: What are the Minister's priorities for education in South Wales East for the remaining weeks of this Assembly. OAQ(3)1670(CEL)

Leighton Andrews: The Government's priorities remain as set out in 'One Wales', with additional measures in response to the economic downturn. I have also made it clear that I want more funding to reach the education front line by freeing up resources as highlighted in the independent review of administering the education system.

A-level Choices

13. Peter Black: *Will the Minister make a statement on the range of A-Level choices available in South Wales West. OAQ(3)1697(CEL)*

Leighton Andrews: From September 2011, the development of local curricula will ensure that learners will have access to a broader range of A-level and vocational courses. In planning the local curriculum, schools and colleges must take account of the needs of learners and the demands of the local employment market.

Further Education

14. Chris Franks: *Will the Minister make a statement on investment in Further Education in Cardiff. OAQ(3)1664(CEL)*

Leighton Andrews: I have recently announced three-year budgets for all post-16 education and although there is a slight reduction in the next academic year, against the backdrop of falling budgets, funding for colleges and school sixth-forms in all areas across Wales is set to rise in the following two years.

STEM Subjects

15. Christine Chapman: *What is the Minister doing to encourage the take-up of STEM subjects. OAQ(3)1681(CEL)*

Leighton Andrews: The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to establishing a national science academy to promote the take-up of STEM subjects at all levels to ensure that Wales has a continuous pipeline of people graduating from colleges and universities with the appropriate qualifications and skills.