

Social Services (Worcestershire)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase funding of social services in Worcestershire; and if he will make a statement. [52733]

Mr. Boateng: We recently announced, as part of the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, that Personal Social Services will receive an additional £2.8 billion over the next three years, an average annual real terms growth of 3.1 per cent. over the period. Details of each local authority's share of these increased resources will be announced later in the year.

Hepatitis C

Mr. Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will respond to representations made on behalf of people infected with hepatitis C by blood products. [53098]

Mr. Dobson: I have today written to the Haemophilia Society explaining that, after lengthy and very careful consideration, we have concluded that haemophiliacs who have been infected with hepatitis C through National Health Service treatment should not receive special payments.

Government policy is that compensation or other financial help to particular patients or groups of patients is paid out only where the NHS or individuals working in it have been at fault. The needs of people whose condition results from inadvertent harm is met from benefits available to the population in general. On that basis, we have decided not to make an exception to the general rule in the case of haemophiliacs infected with hepatitis C.

Whilst the Society makes a special case for haemophiliacs because the infection comes on top of a pre-existing serious long term medical condition, the same considerations apply to other individual patients and groups of patients, whether inadvertently infected with another illness or harmed as a result of another medical or surgical procedure who can obtain compensation only if there has been negligence. The Society also argued that, as Government provides financial help to haemophiliacs infected with HIV, this scheme should be extended to cover people with hepatitis C. However, our view is the circumstances were different: the stigma around HIV at the time the original decision was taken, the fact that it was generally considered a sexually transmitted disease and that haemophiliacs could inadvertently infect their partners were all important considerations which do not apply to hepatitis C.

The Society was particularly concerned that young people were fearful of the possibility of passing on hepatitis C. That is a concern we share. The Department is therefore working with the Society to develop a project aimed at helping young people with haemophilia and related disorders who are infected with hepatitis C to understand their condition and so improve their future health, education and employment prospects. We will help with funding for this project.

In an earlier decision, we have already agreed that recombinant Factor VIII is made available to children under 16 and to new patients.

WALES

Asbestos

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance his Department issues to those constructing buildings for which it is responsible on the use of materials containing asbestos. [52303]

Mr. Ron Davies: The construction industry no longer uses asbestos because safe alternatives are available.

When asbestos has to be removed from a building, the dismantling, removal from site and ensuring the building is free of all asbestos dust, is strictly controlled by Health and Safety Executive regulations.

New Deal

Mr. Healey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people his Department is committed to employing during 1998 under (a) the subsidised job option and (b) the unsubsidised job option of the New Deal programme. [52578]

Mr. Ron Davies: The Welsh Office intends to employ at least 20 subsidised people under the New Deal this year. The number of unsubsidised people employed will depend on the number of applicants from the New Deal programme who are successful in open recruitment competitions.

National Assembly

Sir Raymond Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many car spaces are planned for the new Welsh Assembly building; to whom these spaces will be made available; and how much they will cost to provide. [53099]

Mr. Ron Davies: The design competition to select an Architect to design the building to house the National Assembly for Wales is taking place at present. A small amount of car parking will be provided for disabled people, but until the design process reaches a more advanced stage, the total number of spaces and the cost of that provision will not be known.

Trunk Road Programme

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the report on the review of the Welsh trunk road programme. [53228]

Mr. Hain: The report "Driving Wales Forward" has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Vehicles

Mr. Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the vehicles due for replacement by (a) his Department and (b) bodies listed in the National Asset Register in (i) 1998-99, (ii) 1999-2000 and (iii) 2000-01 will be replaced by vehicles using (1) petrol, (2) diesel, (3) natural gas, (4) electric batteries and (5) other. [52620]