

Wednesday 11 September 2013

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Crown Office

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which (a) Crown Office and (b) NHS department is responsible for ensuring that a deceased person's next-of-kin or family is given the opportunity to arrange for the disposal of (i) brain, (ii) tissue and (iii) other body parts that have been removed after death, and which person has overall responsibility.

(S4W-16727)

Frank Mulholland: The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) deals with the investigation of around 12,000 deaths every year and instructs post mortem examinations in respect of some cases.

Since April 2012 in situations where the Procurator Fiscal has instructed a post mortem examination in the public interest and the pathologist has advised the Procurator Fiscal that it is necessary to retain the brain or another organ after the examination, the COPFS Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit now has responsibility for ensuring that the deceased person's nearest relatives are made aware of the retention and consulted regarding their wishes in respect of any further steps once retention is no longer required. Prior to that, responsibility lay with Procurators Fiscal locally.

In the NHS, the arrangements for the disposal of an organ are the responsibility of the department carrying out the post-mortem examination, which may be the pathology department. The chief operating officer of the organisation undertaking the post-mortem examination would have overall responsibility for services delivered by his/her organisation.

Under section 38 of the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006, tissue samples taken during a post mortem examination become part of the medical records. As such, nearest relatives will not routinely be asked about their preferences for disposal of tissue.

Enterprise and Environment

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the outcomes were of the recent visit to Scandinavia by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment.

(S4O-02360)

Richard Lochhead: My recent trip to Scandinavia sought to learn about their experiences of implementing successful policies that relate to my portfolio, such as empowering rural communities, waste management, and the promotion of local food.

At Sweden's national deposit return scheme I heard how it has boosted recycling, harnessed high volumes of good quality recyclables and helped tackle the problem of litter. I also visited the Copenhagen House of Food, which coordinates the distribution of fresh local food across the public sector.

As well as meeting the Swedish Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister, I also met representatives of Sweden's Rural Parliament and, of course, since then, I am pleased to have announced that the first meeting of Scotland's first Rural Parliament will take place next year.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what environmental impact the proposed coal bed methane extraction at Canonbie will have on the town and the surrounding area.

(S4O-02361)

Paul Wheelhouse: An assessment of the environmental impact of the coalbed methane proposal was set out in the environmental statement associated with the planning application.

Findings from the environmental statement revealed that there are no designations regarding ecology or archaeological interests at or adjacent to the site. No significant adverse impacts were

identified in the studies relating to landscape, ecology, hydrology, hydrogeology, noise, traffic, air quality, archaeology, recreation or tourism.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) also assessed the environmental impact in issuing associated controlled activities regulations licences. SEPA has in place a robust regulatory environmental framework for the operation of activity regarding extraction of unconventional gases.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish its annual report on wildlife crime for 2012.

(S4W-16779)

Paul Wheelhouse: Scotland's first Wildlife Crime Annual Report will be published shortly.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government how many brown hare there have been in (a) Scotland and (b) Orkney in each of the last five years.

(S4W-16934)

Paul Wheelhouse: No accurate population data for the period requested is available. The last brown hare population estimate for Scotland was in 1995. This indicated a population of 187,250 (+/- 25%). Population trend data for Scotland is available from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's National Gamebag Census, and shows that there was a significant decline in the bag index between 1961 and 1985. The trend stabilised at this low level thereafter. It has been suggested that the decline may have resulted from the loss of arable pockets in a broadly pastoral landscape as agriculture intensified, especially in the uplands, as well as from increased predation pressure as fox numbers rose.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether there is a need for additional protection for brown hare (a) across the country or (b) in those areas where the species is considered to be under threat.

(S4W-16935)

Paul Wheelhouse: The Scottish Government believes that full legal protection for brown hares is unlikely to reverse the declines that the species has experienced. Hares are shot both as game and because of the damage they can cause to crops. There is evidence that even though spring shoots may reduce the population by 50% or more, there is little, or no, apparent long term effect on population levels. The main issues affecting this species are changes in farming practices and in particular the loss of mixed habitats.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has received since 2007 regarding the need for additional protection for brown hare and what its response was.

(S4W-16937)

Paul Wheelhouse: Representations were received from the Hare Preservation Trust in 2010 as part of the consultations on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill. The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Scotland) Act 2011 subsequently introduced close seasons for brown hares and mountain hares, during which the animals could not be hunted. The aim of the close season was to protect hares during the period when they were most likely to have dependent young. The close season for the brown hare is from 1 February to 30 September.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on eagle owls (a) being released into the wild and (b) escaping captivity.

(S4W-16938)

Paul Wheelhouse: The release of non-native animals can have unpredictable and serious impacts on biodiversity and human health. For these reasons it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) to release, or allow to escape, any animal outwith its native range. The eagle owl is outwith its native range in Scotland.

Health and Social Care

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many skin cancer specialist nurses each NHS board has (a) employed and (b) appointed in each year since 1999.

(S4W-16760)

Alex Neil: Information on skin cancer specialist nurses, that each NHS board has employed and appointed, in each year since 1999 is not available.

However, statistical information regarding numbers of skin cancer specialist nurses is available from 2004 and can be accessed on the Information Services Division (ISD) website:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Workforce/>

It should be noted that skin cancer specialist nurses are part of the clinical nurse specialist staff grouping and delivery of this care would be as part of a multidisciplinary team, which could include dermatology, oncology and plastic surgery.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what resources it provides to help with the appointment of skin cancer specialist nurses.

(S4W-16762)

Alex Neil: While the Scottish Government provides the policies, frameworks and resources for high quality health care in Scotland, it is for each NHSScotland board to decide how best to deliver those services, including specialist nursing services, taking into account national priorities and local needs. We expect NHSScotland boards to plan and utilise funding, facilities and staff to deliver high quality care and support for patients and families.

NHSScotland board nurse directors are discussing issues regarding the provision of specialist nursing services across a range of conditions. In addition the Scottish Government will host a seminar in early 2014, followed by a series of fora, for specialist nurse groups and other stakeholders to discuss issues around the role of specialist nurses in relation to specific conditions, including skin cancer.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which of the agreed actions in the *Final Report of the Remote and Rural Implementation Group* have been implemented and when the outstanding actions will be implemented.

(S4W-16802)

Alex Neil: The Remote and Rural Implementation Group (RRIG) which oversaw the implementation of the Scottish Government's report, *Delivering for Remote & Rural Healthcare*, was disbanded in 2010. Their final report was published on the North of Scotland Planning Group (NoSPG) website:

http://www.nospg.nhsscotland.com/wp-content/Final_Report_RRIG_Oct101.pdf.

It confirmed that 80 of 83 recommendations and forward issues had been delivered. Shortly after publication, RRIG confirmed that the three remaining recommendations had also been delivered.

NoSPG continues to provide support to NHS boards in delivering sustainable remote and rural healthcare.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to each of the recommendations in the *Report on Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Humans in 2011*.

(S4W-16805)

Alex Neil: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-14441 on 8 May 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many NHS staff (a) have and (b) have not been paid for public holidays while on maternity leave in each year since 2008.

(S4W-16807)

Alex Neil: The information requested is not held centrally.

Terms and conditions issues in NHSScotland are discussed and agreed in partnership between management and staff. It was recently agreed that staff on maternity leave should accrue public holidays and that this provision should be backdated to 1 April 2008. All staff who have been on maternity leave since that date are therefore entitled to accrue public holidays.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it has taken since 2008 to ensure that NHS boards advise staff on maternity leave that they are entitled to be paid for public holidays and do not have to take time off in lieu instead.

(S4W-16808)

Alex Neil: It was recently agreed through partnership discussions that staff on maternity leave should accrue public holidays from 1 April 2008, and a letter was sent to all NHS boards confirming this. It is for NHS boards, as employers, to ensure that staff receive any relevant information about their terms and conditions.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-05856 by Michael Matheson on 1 March 2012, what programmes are (a) in place and (b) planned to ensure that children receive adequate levels of vitamin D.

(S4W-16835)

Michael Matheson: As noted in response to S4W-05856, the Healthy Start scheme is in place to ensure free vitamins, including vitamin D, are available to families on some benefits.

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing uptake of the Healthy Start scheme in Scotland, as part of the implementation of *Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action*.

The Scottish Government is currently running a one-year trial using community pharmacies to make healthy start vitamins available to those on the scheme, and for others to purchase. This trial will monitor the uptake of the vitamins, with a view to extending the scheme in future if uptake increases. Around 96% of community pharmacies across Scotland are taking part in the trial.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what funding was made available to NHS Dumfries and Galloway in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13 to promote young people's health and wellbeing and how this was allocated.

(S4W-16863)

Alex Neil: The Scottish Government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all children and young people to ensure they have the best start in life, are ready to succeed and live longer, healthier lives.

All NHS boards, including NHS Dumfries and Galloway, are expected to ensure that resources are spent in a way that improves the health and wellbeing of the community and that delivers best value for taxpayers.

NHS boards receive funding allocations to meet the needs of their resident population. It is for boards to decide how best to utilise this funding to meet national and local priorities.

Learning and Justice

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve police complaints procedures.

(S4O-02368)

Kenny MacAskill: The establishment of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner on 1 April put in place effective independent oversight of investigations into serious incidents involving the police.

The commissioner also carries out the role previously exercised by the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, in reviewing the police handling of complaints when referred to them. Working with partners we will continually look at ways to improve police complaints procedures.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve the safety of young people from so-called date rape drugs.

(S4O-02369)

Roseanna Cunningham: The Scottish Government is taking a range of actions to improve the safety of young people from date rape drugs, including supporting awareness raising by partners such as Rape Crisis Scotland and working alongside the alcohol trade through the Alcohol Industry Partnership which encourages licensed premises to adopt best practice to promote safer drinking.

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what funding is available for local crime prevention and community safety initiatives through sources other than Police Scotland.

(S4O-02371)

Roseanna Cunningham: The Scottish Government believes that everyone has the right to be safe and feel safe in their communities. The Scottish Government also firmly believes that prevention is better than cure and is working to tackle the underlying causes of crime.

That is why we continue to invest directly in centres of expertise such as Crimestoppers, Scottish Neighbourhood Watch and the Scottish Community Safety Network.

Local authorities are also responsible for identifying local needs and priorities and directing their resources appropriately.

Strategy and External Affairs

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-16718 by Fiona Hyslop on 15 August 2013, whether it will provide a breakdown of the costs associated with the trip.

(S4W-16791)

Fiona Hyslop: As per paragraph 9.17 of the Ministerial Code, the Scottish Government publishes an annual list of all travel overseas by all ministers by means of an answer to a parliamentary question. Costs and other information of overseas visits are also published on the Scottish Government website on a regular basis once all associated costs are available.