



Northern Ireland
Assembly

OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)
and
**JOURNAL OF
PROCEEDINGS**

Volume 114

(11 March 2016 to 25 March 2016)

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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sitings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 14 March 2016

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Rates (Amendment) Bill: Royal Assent

Mr Speaker: I wish to inform the House that the Rates (Amendment) Bill received Royal Assent on Friday 11 March 2016, and it will be known as the Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Assembly Business

Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4): Suspension

Mrs McKeivitt: I beg to move

That Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) be suspended for 14 March 2016.

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) be suspended for 14 March 2016.

Ministerial Statements

Children in the Justice System: Scoping Study

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): In May last year, I announced the launch of a scoping study on children in the justice system. In a statement to the Assembly, I outlined the reasons why such a study was needed and what I hoped it would achieve. I described the need to build on the work begun in the youth justice review to consider whether the legislative, strategic and structural architecture surrounding the youth justice system was adequate to address the many and complex needs of the children who come into contact with it.

The scoping study began in earnest in June with the first meeting of the steering group. This group, chaired by the chief executive of the Youth Justice Agency, and the subgroups commissioned by it consisted of senior representatives from each of the criminal justice organisations and those Departments and agencies that play a major role in children's lives.

Two ideas exchange workshops with the community and voluntary sector and two workshops with the parents of children involved in youth justice and with children at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre were also held.

I place on record my thanks to all those involved in the process for giving their time, experiences and expertise.

The steering group has now reported back with a range of innovative proposals for change that will require a fundamental shift in how the system views and responds to children who offend. The proposals put forward by the steering group can be grouped broadly under three themes. The first is putting welfare at the heart of the system; the second is maximising community involvement and increasing exit points from the justice system; and the third is developing the disposals available to the judiciary and reducing the use of custody to make it truly a measure of last resort.

I will address each of those themes in turn and outline at a high level the sort of changes that the steering group proposed. In the first theme of welfare, the scoping study emphasised that the needs of the child should form the basis of all interactions with the child. Our system of government segregates those needs into departmental responsibilities, addressing each independently. That segregation pervades the whole system and contributes to many of the issues that manifest as criminal justice problems. That is why I believe that one of the key measures in the next Programme for Government should focus on improving the life outcomes of our children. Implementing the proposals arising out of the scoping study would move us significantly towards achieving such an outcome and should be a priority area across the new Executive.

The primary proposal put forward by the steering group under the theme of welfare echoes the calls from the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the youth justice review, and it is to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. I am fully aware that not all parties yet agree with the need to do that, but we should not ignore the fact that the change is strongly advocated and supported by experts in youth justice in Northern Ireland, across these islands and internationally. Raising the age would

take vulnerable young children entirely out of the remit of criminal justice. Offending behaviour by young children would then be addressed in a different way, as in most other countries in Europe. Young children would still be held to account for their actions but would be supported to change rather than criminalised.

We also need to look at the approach taken with older children, which is why another of the proposals is to place the youth justice system in a welfare and social services model rather than a criminal justice one. That means ensuring that, wherever possible, actions in childhood do not have a lasting negative effect on the child's life through a criminal record. It means considering again whether the only custodial institution that we have for children should sit in the criminal justice system, given the overwhelming mental health and addictions issues prevalent amongst the children detained there.

The second theme emerging from the scoping study is the need to maximise community involvement and increase exit points from the justice system. The view of the scoping study is that the default position for children who offend should be to provide support to address their needs. As such, the proposals under this theme concentrate on ensuring that formal criminal justice action is taken only when absolutely necessary. Instead, the steering group proposed that opportunities be maximised at local community level to work together to address offending behaviour at an early stage through restorative practices, problem-solving approaches and early engagement.

The main tenet is that no child should cross the boundary into a police station unless it is absolutely called for due to the seriousness of their behaviour. The steering group therefore proposed that every interaction with a child that brings them into the youth justice system should be challenged to ensure that there is clear justification for them being there and that all other options have been explored and exhausted. That should begin with a presumption against arrest and should follow through the rest of the system with the introduction of advocates and gatekeepers whose task it is to challenge decisions at each stage of the process.

In tandem with that, the scoping study points to the need to redesign the youth justice system to increase the number of exit points that allow a young person to access support without a criminal record, where appropriate. The proposals cover the creation of exit points at all stages in the system, from PSNI action to youth engagement clinics, through to the creation of new disposals and into the courts through to the introduction of a new problem-solving stage. The emphasis should be on individualised, tailored responses that address needs and provide the support needed to prevent future offending behaviour.

I want to make it clear that, when I refer to the importance of recognising and responding to the needs of the child, it is not intended to excuse or justify the impact of the child's behaviour on their victim and the wider community. A child should absolutely be held to account for their actions but in a welfare system that meets their multiple and complex needs. All this is ultimately about making our community safer.

The third theme covers the disposals available to the judiciary and the use of custody. The main proposal is to rewrite youth justice legislation to make it clearer, easier to understand and, crucially, more effective. Instead of

the seven community disposal options that are currently available, there should be a single, tiered, flexible order. Judges will be able to tailor the order to meet the needs of the child in front of them. Likewise, instead of five custodial orders, there should be a maximum of two: a shorter one for less serious offences; and another for more serious, persistent offending. Both orders will explicitly state that children will never be detained in any prison setting.

Regarding the use of custody, the steering group is clear that it is all too easy for children to enter the juvenile justice centre. Its proposals therefore focus on the need to establish alternative accommodation options, especially short-term overnight calm-down spaces. Having those options means that Woodlands no longer needs to be used inappropriately as a place of safety for children.

The steering group has also put forward suggestions encompassing bail and remand, including a presumption in favour of bail with no conditions. Significant limitations should also be put on the use of remand, through, for example, the introduction of a real-prospects test.

Members will agree that, taken together, the proposals comprise a challenging programme for change. I have written to my Executive colleagues seeking their support to turn the scoping study's ambitious proposals into a concrete programme of action. I intend to establish an implementation group comprising senior officials from all relevant organisations and Departments. They will be tasked with developing detailed recommendations for consideration by the Executive and wider public consultation in the next mandate. The recommendations will be based on the scoping study proposals, which I fully endorse.

To summarise, the proposals fall under three themes: first, to put welfare at the heart of the system, which includes raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility and placing the youth justice system within a welfare model; secondly, to maximise community involvement and increase exit points from the justice system; and, thirdly, to develop the disposals available to the judiciary and reduce the use of custody to make it truly a measure of last resort.

I am very proud of the strides that have been made in youth justice, primarily through the youth justice review, during my tenure as Justice Minister. It is clear, however, that there is more to do. Fundamental questions remain about how we react to the worst behaved, most troubled children, who cause the greatest harm in our communities, and about whether the punitive approach that we have traditionally taken is the best way in which to encourage them to change their behaviour. We need to recognise that we have a shared responsibility — not only to the children but to their victims — to get in early to address problematic behaviour before it escalates and to correct a course that, if unchecked, promises only ongoing misery for both the child and the community.

What I am proposing is an ambitious programme of change. I hope that my successor can count on support at all levels when he or she returns to the issue in the Assembly.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): The Minister is right to highlight the fact that there is not political consensus around raising the age of criminal responsibility, although I suspect that there is growing consensus around the idea that we should, as far as practicable, keep young people out of the formal

justice system, as all the evidence points to the increasing likelihood that they are entering the revolving door of the criminal justice system.

Although I support the general thrust of what the Minister said, particularly some of the themes around the problem-solving model of justice, which the Committee has been keen on over the past year, I seek an assurance that we are principally talking about young people who have been accused of non-violent, low-level offending and that, if they do pose a threat to the community, they will be detained in the traditional way.

What input did victims have into the scoping study? What is the Minister's view of the likely effect on victims, given the proposal for the presumption in favour of bail until a case is dealt with? That could, of course, mean that victims run the risk of almost immediately coming into contact with those who allegedly committed an offence against them.

Finally, the new Committee for Justice will wish to look at the detail of the proposals, if the new Minister brings them forward. Does the Minister envisage any legislation being required as part of his package of proposals?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Ross for the usual cooperative way in which the Committee, and he personally, have responded to the proposals. I think that he and I can agree on the need to move towards a more problem-solving approach and a consensus, as he describes, emerging to keep children out of the criminal justice system. No doubt, the Assembly will debate specifically the minimum age of criminal responsibility at some future stage.

The Member asked at the end about legislation, and that will certainly need to be provided, not least to deal with the multiplicity of orders that we have and to ensure that that is streamlined in a way that makes it easier to tailor orders to the needs of particular children. The other three points he raised tend to run together. Having two custodial orders ensures that we can deal with more difficult offences, including violent offences, in a different way from non-violent issues. That will clearly have an effect on bail, but the "no reasonable prospects" test is a key issue in how we address bail. If there are concerns about violence, it will not be the same case as many of the issues that currently result in young people going into custody. We should, of course, acknowledge that the number who are currently detained in Woodlands — generally around a couple of dozen children — is vastly fewer than a generation ago. That illustrates good work being done in managing that kind of behaviour in the community. Clearly, the balance, particularly on violence issues, will be a difficult one for the Assembly to strike in the future.

12.15 pm

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas. I thank the Minister for his statement and, indeed, welcome the three broad themes of putting welfare at the heart of the system, maximising community involvement and the exit points and disposals available to the judiciary. Does the Minister agree that the new Minister, whoever that is, should take this on immediately? The sooner we address these issues in the new mandate, the better. Does he also agree that it is a good time to examine the relationship between the Youth Justice Agency and the Prison Service?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr McCartney for his role as Deputy Chair of the Committee and for the welcome he has given. I am not sure how immediately any new Minister in the next mandate could take on the issue, given that there is a lot of detailed work to be done by officials, but I hope that the view that he has expressed, which is the same as mine, is taken on board: this is an issue on which we need to move rapidly.

Members will be well aware that certain issues that we had hoped to address in this mandate, such as the specific legal bar on children being admitted to Hydebank Wood, were not proceeded with, in order to get a more joined-up package and to ensure that we did things better together. That is not an excuse to delay indefinitely making progress; it is an excuse to delay from late in this mandate to early in the next, and I trust that we will see real opportunities.

As to the relationships between what are currently different parts of the justice system, there are clearly issues affecting community services where we have youth justice responsibility and probation dealing with adults. There are issues relating to the best way in which to manage Woodlands as the juvenile justice centre, alongside some of the other facilities. The relationship between that, Hydebank Wood College and the adult prisons is clearly a complex issue of management to see that we get the best joined-up system. I suspect that he and, perhaps, I will be raising that with the next Minister.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his statement. Minister, I commend you on the work that the Department has done on the matter, particularly on raising the age of criminal consent. Do you envisage a day when young people in these circumstances will not be dealt with by the justice system and a health, welfare and social services approach will be taken?

Mr Ford: That issue is the topic of the moment. It is clear from the recommendations coming through from the scoping study that we need to move more towards a welfare approach when dealing with children and young people. Once we do, the question then becomes the level of contact between the justice system and the health and social care system.

In my statement, I highlighted the significant number of those in the juvenile justice centre who have mental health or addiction issues, and the more we look at that, the more it becomes an issue as to how relationships are made between the other aspects of residential care provided by the health and social care trusts. There are issues that will need to be worked through, but I can certainly see us looking at a move towards health and social care, to provide the best way of ensuring that young people are supported and encouraged to address their offending and to make the community safer in that respect.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his statement. I am sure that he will agree that this needs joined-up working with Health and Education. In our seminars, we have been looking at problem-solving courts. Has the Minister had discussions with other Departments? If so, what has been the response?

Mr Ford: I very much appreciate the point that Mr Douglas makes about the necessity for joined-up working. Officials from the Departments that he highlights — Health and Education — and others were involved in the scoping study. There was positive and constructive engagement with some of those from Health, in particular, who were

trying to see the way in which we could ensure that services were tailored to the needs of young people and not split across silos in different areas. Members will also be aware of the work going on to transfer responsibility for education in Woodlands to the Department of Education and the Education Authority. We are seeing movement forward. However, as the Member highlights, when we look at problem-solving courts, whether through some of the work that those of us who have had the opportunity to travel to the US have seen, the work being done by the district judge in Londonderry Magistrates' Court relating to domestic violence or the work done through youth engagement clinics, we see that it is clear that the concept of problem-solving has to be a significant step forward for a significant part of the justice system, not least for children and young people.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Minister, in your statement, you said that you intended to establish an implementation group to carry this forward. When do you intend that to happen, as the mandate is coming to a close?

Mr Ford: I left out a point that I probably should have made to Mr Douglas, who has left, just before I finished my answer to his question. As I said in the statement, I have written to ministerial colleagues. I am assuming that ministerial colleagues who allowed their officials to participate in the work will agree to their continuing to do so as we get the implementation group under way. I hope, therefore, that, whilst some of us may be busy over the next couple of months, walking the streets and knocking doors, officials will find something useful and constructive to do that will enable the process to be carried forward in a significant way and will help speed up the process. However, clearly it is a formal issue for other Ministers to allow their officials to engage, but I am presuming that that will be accepted given that they have already been participating.

Mr Beggs: The Minister mentioned the role that the health trusts and, indeed, the community and voluntary sector can play in assisting young people who may have become known to the criminal justice system. Will he acknowledge that worthwhile partnership working is already going on between the trusts, the community and voluntary sector and the Youth Justice Agency through such services as the Choices Family Support Service, which engages with families who are experiencing difficulty and reduces the risks of young people becoming known to the justice system in the first place? Will he continue to show support for that important work, so that young people can get back to school and the risk of offending is removed?

Mr Ford: I entirely accept Mr Beggs's point about the good work that is done in partnerships at present, which, as he highlights, is mostly around early prevention. I am keen to see that we develop those partnerships and ensure that the best organisations to provide the appropriate services to young people who have, unfortunately, got caught up in the criminal justice system are provided. We need to take the partnerships to a slightly different level from the good work that is being done in many areas in a variety of partnerships that help to reduce the number of young people who come into contact with the justice system.

Mr Frew: This is a good day for Northern Ireland and for young people, as we see the launch of the child protection disclosure arrangements that I brought to the Justice Bill. I

thank the Minister for working with me on that scheme. We see the fruition of that today.

It seems to be the case that young people aged 13 and 14 can run amok in developments — running over cars, booting in doors and smearing fast food over pensioners' windows — terrorising people on a nightly or weekly basis.

What further support does the Minister think needs to be applied to those victims — victims who think that the police's response is becoming increasingly inappropriate and inadequate?

Mr Ford: I thought that we would get to the next item of business that I have before I had the opportunity to highlight the child protection issue, but certainly, at this stage, I acknowledge Mr Frew's role in that. I am delighted that the announcement was made. There is no doubt that most Members of the House will have heard Chief Superintendent Clarke speaking on 'Good Morning Ulster' about a significant step forward in child protection that has happened today.

The Member talks about numbers of young people running amok. Clearly, there are areas where there are problems and, at times, problems bubble up, but we should acknowledge the fact that antisocial behaviour statistics have actually been going down significantly and consistently in nearly every area of Northern Ireland over the last seven or eight years. I put that in terms of the fact that the decrease was occurring before the devolution of justice; I am not personally claiming all the credit for that. I acknowledge that there are areas which, at times, have problems. The important issue is to see the work that is being done, in particular around youth engagement clinics. Two or three years ago, I had the benefit of talking to some of those who had been involved in some of the clinics in Derry and had been talking about some of the specific issues as to how, in one case, victims or, at least, victims' representatives had engaged with young people who were making their lives a misery and ensured that that stopped. Last week, I actually sat in on a formal clinic in Belfast, where I heard, again, a young person who was confronted with the effect of his actions, and a restorative programme was worked out.

Good work is being done, in general terms. If there are specific issues, people need to highlight them to the police and the police need to follow them up in an appropriate way. The important thing in the context of this study is to see the good work that is being done. The issue is to ensure that youth justice workers are put in contact with the individuals who have created the difficulties to ensure that that good restorative practice can be done. Certainly, I believe that we have seen significant reductions in that kind of behaviour because young people have been confronted with their actions in a way that ensures that they are then more likely to be responsible citizens in the future.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his statement. He will be well aware of the Green Party's support for an increase in the minimum age of criminal responsibility. Can he outline for us the harm that is being done to the children themselves and to wider society by those who resist a change to what is one of the lowest ages of criminal responsibility in Europe?

Mr Ford: I welcome Mr Agnew's support for raising the minimum age. Sadly, we need the support of larger parties than his or mine if we are to make progress on

the issue. There is no doubt that the very small number of young people, particularly within the couple of years above the minimum age of 10, who come into contact with the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland — we are talking about something like 20 to 30 young people in any year — are in real danger, because of the way we operate in the justice system, of getting swept into a circumstance that leads them to further difficult and offending behaviour. By raising the minimum age and ensuring that we move to an appropriate care method that deals with what is almost certainly, in the case of 10- and 11-year-olds, an underlying family problem, we are much more likely to address it than by treating children who have been left in some sort of state of a dysfunctional family, difficult school relationships or mental health problems purely through criminal sanctions. We are in much more danger that they will continue to offend. Even though, by and large, we do our best to move away from that, the very issue of being involved in the criminal justice system at all makes it more difficult to provide the treatment and care that is actually the priority that they need.

Mr A Maginness: I welcome the Minister's statement. It is a very positive one, and it points the way in which Department policy should, in fact, go in relation to children. The emphasis on welfare is very important. On the point that Mr Frew made about dealing with young people who offend persistently and extremely, what we are going to do about them when they enter a custodial situation? Can we improve on what we do for them?

12.30 pm

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Maginness for his support on that. How we improve services for the small number of young people who come into custody is crucial because it takes us away from the diversions that Mr Beggs talked about and into the area of how we deal with those who are most difficult. The intention of having the two levels of custodial order will make it clear what the difference is for the most serious and persistent offenders. It then becomes an issue of ensuring that the services that are necessary are provided in a better way, whether that is movement more towards involvement with social care and how it ties in with the significant improvements that we seek to make around education and, indeed, for those who are beyond compulsory school age, tying in with further education is a key part of it. We need to ensure that we get greater joining up around healthcare, which has not moved as far in the juvenile justice system as we had hoped it would have in the present custodial setting. There is a lot there, but it largely revolves around the general points, which are around ensuring a joined-up system to meet the needs of the individual young person or child, rather than assuming that silos will deliver education in one place, social care somewhere else and justice issues somewhere else. That has to be the fundamental way in which we continue to make such improvements as we have made over recent years.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing my question. I welcome the broad thrust of the Minister's statement. The Minister may know that, at evidence sessions in the Justice Committee, some concern was expressed about the position of looked-after children. Would the Minister care to comment on issues around that and how they can be best addressed?

Mr Ford: I need to be slightly careful that I do not offend on another Minister's responsibilities, but I accept that the point is significant. There is no doubt that there has been a tendency, in some cases, to use Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre as a place of safety inappropriately and perhaps more easily than should be the case. That has tended to fall under two factors, one of which is geography. It is funny how children from Fermanagh can be found an appropriate place of safety, rather than being brought to Bangor, much more easily than children from Belfast or north Down. There is an issue about that aspect of management. It is also the case that, when children are already being looked after in a children's home and exhibit difficult behaviour, there is, not unnaturally, given the circumstances of those who also have to look after other children in that home, a tendency to assume that another place of safety is the right place to go to and that will be the juvenile justice centre. That is an issue, and it is being looked at in some detail in the agency, and, if we get a better joining up, including the potential overnight accommodation that I referred to, we will have a better chance of ensuring that looked-after children are not unnecessarily involved in the juvenile custodial facility.

Social Housing Investment and Reform

Mr Speaker: The Minister for Social Development wishes to make a —

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I have started. You can come back on it after.

The Minister for Social Development wishes to make a statement. Just before calling the Minister to make his statement, I remind him that Standing Order 18A(2) requires him to make a written copy of it available to Members at least half an hour before delivering it in the Chamber. I understand that the Minister may not have met that requirement. Therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 18A(2), I ask him to state the reason for that prior to making the statement.

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was of the understanding that, in fact, the statement had gone out, and I apologise for that. I cannot say anything more, but I will investigate as to why it had not. I was assured that it had. I made the enquiry quite early. I think that I made the enquiry at around 11.00 am, and I was told that the statement was out.

I wish to make a statement to the Assembly on the challenges ahead for social housing investment and for social housing delivery in Northern Ireland. Housing is a universal need and plays an important role in all our lives and in shaping the communities in which we live. Housing delivers much more than simply putting a roof over heads. It affects our health and well-being and thereby influences our ability to take full advantage of life's opportunities. The construction and maintenance of housing helps to drive job and wealth creation and to sustain and regenerate communities.

My vision for housing — a vision that I have no doubt is shared by all in the Chamber — is that everyone can have access to good housing at a reasonable cost. Social housing has an important role to play in delivering that vision. Over the last 10 years, a number of reports have discussed the potential for change in the delivery of social housing in Northern Ireland. In response to that, my colleague and the then Social Development Minister, Nelson McCausland, launched the social housing reform programme in a statement to the Assembly in February 2013, and the Executive mandated an exploration of the possible options for change. That programme has made good progress in identifying and assessing those options. On 28 January, my Department published the tenant participation strategy and action plan, which sets out what social landlords should do to enable tenants to participate in decisions that affect them. We will also publish a new regulatory framework for social landlords as soon as possible, and work is continuing in the area of social rents and on how the social housing sector engages with local government.

At the core of the programme, however, is the complex and sensitive question of what are the best structures for delivering social housing in Northern Ireland. The question is complex because many factors have to be taken into account. It is sensitive because of the history of social housing in Northern Ireland and the track record of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as one of the largest social landlords in the United Kingdom and the deliverer of a wide range of housing programmes on behalf of my Department. However, those structures have remained fundamentally unchanged for 40 years. Indeed,

in that regard, those structures are perhaps unique in the Northern Ireland public sector in that they have not been subject to the kind of structural reform that has been experienced across local and central government and in the areas of health and education. The reforms have been driven by the need to deliver services efficiently in response to the needs of those whom we all seek to serve: the people and communities of Northern Ireland. In the next mandate, it will be right and necessary for the Executive and the Assembly to take forward the work that my predecessors and I have started in looking at our social housing structures and asking whether they provide the most efficient and effective system to meet the needs of tenants and citizens.

Indeed, in the recent political agreement, 'A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan', the Executive made a commitment to progress significant reform of social housing provision, focused on reducing departmental expenditure limit subsidy pressures. In the current challenging public expenditure environment, it is essential that we look for ways to ensure that front-line services can be protected and that the arrangements we put in place to deliver services are affordable and financially sustainable.

When we ask what structures will best deliver for tenants and citizens, we must first be clear about what we expect the structures to deliver. Most of us in the Chamber will have helped constituents who need repairs to their homes, so we understand that one of the first things we expect is that tenants of social housing should have decent homes to live in. My Department, with the Housing Executive, has been examining what needs to be done to meet that expectation for the Housing Executive's 88,000 properties. The results of that work were published last week, and the implications flowing from it are sobering. Over the next 30 years, the Housing Executive should invest £6.7 billion to bring all its homes up to an acceptable standard and keep them in that condition. A backlog of maintenance work has built up, so £1.5 billion should be spent in the five years from 2015-16. That backlog has grown because we are spending what is available rather than what is needed. Those are huge sums of money. Only part of it can be covered from the rental income collected by the Housing Executive. It will also need a massive injection of extra capital of between £470 million and £700 million to address the backlog.

For sums of money on that scale to be provided from public funds would force the most difficult of choices on the next Minister, Assembly and Executive. Such sums could be provided only by sacrificing other capital programmes. To illustrate the kind of sacrifice that I mean, the £100 million per year that, as a minimum, would be needed is the same as my Department spends on new-build social housing. The public funding of the Housing Executive's investment requirement from public funds would require that kind of trade-off: the needs of those on the social housing waiting list against the needs of existing Housing Executive tenants.

If we wish to find a way that does not force that kind of choice, borrowing is the only realistic source of the capital injection that we need. The housing challenge in the next mandate will be finding and agreeing a way of giving the Housing Executive the ability to borrow. For the future of the Housing Executive as a major social landlord, for the sustainable long-term future of the 88,000 homes that it

provides, and for the sake of other public services that desperately need public funds, all of us must approach this challenge with an open mind.

I started this statement by reflecting on the fact that, over the last 10 years, a number of reports discussed the potential for change in the delivery of social housing in Northern Ireland. We do not have the luxury of another 10 years. Let me issue a stark warning: if we fail to meet that challenge, the main function of future Ministers with responsibility for housing will likely be to oversee the deterioration of the Housing Executive's stock and the long-term decline of the organisation itself. What I would rather see, and what borrowing can support, is the renaissance of the Housing Executive investing in stock, creating employment and delivering social benefits for its tenants and the communities that it serves.

Any decision about structural reform in social housing or capital priorities will need to be taken by the Executive. However, it is critical that I lay before the Assembly the stark choices that, one way or the other, will have to be made to avoid the disintegration of an essential and much-loved public service.

There is a great deal more to the delivery of social housing in Northern Ireland than the management of the Housing Executive's properties. In the current financial year, £253 million will be spent on other housing programmes by the Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, excluding what is spent on housing benefit.

Those are vital programmes. The social housing development programme builds the homes that people on the waiting list desperately need; co-ownership housing offers first-time buyers an affordable route to get on the property ladder; Supporting People helps thousands of the most vulnerable in their homes; and the affordable warmth and boiler replacement schemes tackle fuel poverty by helping the poorest households to install energy-efficiency measures.

In setting the budget for the next financial year, I fought hard to protect those budgets. However, we all know that the constraints on public funding are set to continue for a number of years. I fear that it will not be possible to continue protecting those vital programmes if we do not take action to substantially reduce the costs of their administration.

In the current year, and excluding housing benefit, approximately £40 million will be spent on administering housing programmes by my Department and the Housing Executive, of which £33 million will be spent by the Housing Executive alone. That activity involves 900 staff. Some obvious duplication and inefficiency arises from the fact that we have the Department and the Housing Executive involved in this work. I want the delivery of housing programmes to be as efficient, flexible and responsive as possible. In tandem with the challenge of borrowing, there is an obvious direction of travel that needs to be followed.

That direction of travel will retain the full confidence of society in fair and equal access to housing based on objective assessment of need; take advantage of the opportunities for joining up the delivery of housing, regeneration and other programmes in the new Department for Communities; cut out duplication and take out layers of housing bureaucracy; deliver real savings that can be reinvested in housing services; and ensure that the

delivery of all housing programmes is directly accountable to Ministers and responsive to emerging priorities.

12.45 pm

The world is moving on, and we need to think about what will be best suited to dealing with the challenges that will face us in 2020 and 2030. Change is the only way to preserve what we value; clinging to the status quo will imperil it. Amidst current funding constraints, what should be the priority: a preference for a particular funding and structural model that has served well in the past or the maintenance of the homes and services on which current tenants rely and which we want to secure for future generations? The need to address these challenges is not new. However, the challenges grow with every passing year that they are not met. Indecision through the next mandate will raise the £6.7 billion challenge that we face to well over £7 billion. This is a nettle that needs to be grasped, and that is why officials in my Department have been tasked with gathering the evidence and examining the options with a view to making recommendations on the way forward that can be considered by the new Executive and Assembly after the election.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the Minister's statement, which is very important, in so far as it addresses the need for a formal resolution to the question of the future provision of social housing. The Minister will become aware in the next week or so that the Social Development Committee has, of course, had a clear focus on the need for the provision of social housing throughout this mandate. We have also included in our legacy report a call to the incoming Department for Communities to address the issue as a matter of urgency, not least in the context of the long-standing list of people in housing stress and the recurring problems associated with homelessness. Although the Minister has addressed that in recent weeks, I am conscious of the fact that the Minister has only been in post for a very short time. He has had two predecessors, so my remarks for the most part will be historical as opposed to being in the context of the current Minister, who I have worked with in the last number of weeks. Anything that the Minister has committed to do, he has done with aplomb, and I commend him for that. I very much welcome the essence of the statement, and I think that all of the members of the Social Development Committee will do likewise.

I move on to speak on behalf of my party, Sinn Féin, as an MLA. It is important to recognise that the essence of the statement is a recognition of the need to retain the Housing Executive as a provider of social housing. I very much welcome that in the statement, although I do want to see the situation moving from hope to intent. I ask the Minister to make sure that we move forward, and the Minister has made it clear that there will require to be political agreement at Executive level on the future of the issue. Therefore, our party is placing it on record again today that there needs to be the retention of the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive needs to be able to get the right to borrow not only to maintain property but to build. The Housing Executive must become a provider as well as just a landlord, and our party will bring that to the table in the time ahead.

I very much recognise what the Minister said in his statement about the context of the cost to the public purse; none of us is oblivious to all of that. We are aware that there are major challenges. The Department was given authority by the Executive in February 2013 to explore options. I suggest that, under the helm of the first Minister to look at it, Nelson McCausland, we wasted —

Mr Speaker: We need a question now.

Mr Maskey: We wasted a considerable amount of time because of what many of us believe was a narrow political agenda.

I know that the Minister cannot make commitments because he may not be the next Minister or whatever. Nevertheless, from his point of view, given the experience that he has garnered as the Minister for Social Development, can he assure us that social housing providers will remain in public ownership?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his comments. I can give him a short or a long answer to that one. The short answer to his question is "Yes". Let me be very clear: as one who has practically lived all of his life involved with housing, whether in the private sector or the public sector, and ever since I was a young councillor in Dungannon in 1973, I have had long experience of the Housing Executive. Those were early days for it also. I, too, come to the issue with a conscience and as someone who has been steeped in dealing with Housing Executive issues and social sector housing over the years. The short answer to the Chairman of the Social Development Committee's question is "Yes, I can". This is not an attempt to privatise or do anything like that. That is not on the agenda at all, and I can assure the Member of that.

Ms P Bradley: I also thank the Minister for a comprehensive statement. For any of us who are back here in the next mandate as part of the Department for Communities, the Minister certainly pointed out the stark reality of the challenges ahead in the social rented sector.

Minister, you will recall that in the UK Budget last summer there were proposed rent reductions in England because, over the past three years, rent in the social sector had increased by 20%. Did that also happen in Northern Ireland?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for her question. I can tell her that it did not. Housing Executive rents increased by 15%, and housing association rents, excluding service charges, of course, increased by 17% over the same period.

Mrs D Kelly: I note the Minister's apology at the start of the statement, but it is not good enough that there were not enough statements for Members of the House to have an opportunity to read. Certainly, the timeliness was woeful.

That being said, the Minister referred to a £6.7 billion necessity to catch up on maintenance and to meet the demands of new build. He refers to the cost of administration and the possible duplication of £40 million between the Department and, indeed, the Housing Executive administration cost of £33 million. That falls far short of the need. As well as other suggestions or solutions that the Minister and his Department have for how that shortfall might be met, I wonder whether the European Investment Bank might be one resource to tap into.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for her question. I thought that I had made it clear at the start why the statement had not gone out: I was under the illusion that, in fact, it was out, for I had made the enquiry. However, I have given an undertaking that I will have the matter looked at to see what really happened.

On the question that you asked, my statement today is designed to set out some of the real challenges that lie ahead for social sector housing. It does not seek to give tight direction, but it says clearly that the new Department and the new Minister, whoever he or she might be, will have real challenges and one option that they do not have is the status quo. The status quo will not be sufficient for the future.

Funding will be another challenge for the new Minister coming in. He or she will have to look at all the options and may have to go into territory that they have never been in before. The Executive, the Minister and, indeed, the Assembly will have to stand up tall on that and make some difficult but very necessary decisions.

Mr Beggs: The Minister said that up to £700 million would be needed to address a backlog of maintenance work etc, but he also said that borrowing was the only realistic source of the funding. Borrowing has to be paid for, and the Northern Ireland Executive have already borrowed considerably more per head of population than other regions. My question to the Minister is this: how is the borrowing to be paid for? How is it to be guaranteed, if it is applied for? What are his ideas around this?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. He has highlighted the real challenge for the days ahead very well. I thought that I had made it clear: the way that we have been doing things in the past will not suffice in the future. Therefore, whoever is in charge of that Department will play a major part, and that obviously leans on the Executive too because they will play a major part here, as we all will or those who are still here. There has to be what I would call some “blue-sky thinking” on how housing is done in the future and how it is financed. I am sure that the Member is well aware that, in fact, what has gone before, while it did the job up to a point, will not do it in the future. If we are not up for change, there are many challenges ahead, and we will fall further behind in the maintenance of housing stock.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his statement, which was difficult to follow because there was no copy available for most of us. I ask him to address the growing demand for social housing that meets the needs of the 21st century and provides shared space and integrated housing. What efforts will be made in the Programme for Government in the future to ensure that the growing demand for integrated housing can be delivered by the social housing providers and the Housing Executive?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. Let me draw this analogy. It was my party that sought to tackle division, particularly in our schools; sadly, we did not get the support for that from some quarters that, we felt, it deserved. We should endeavour to provide good and sustainable housing for tenants, but let me say this: you will never force someone to live where they do not want to live. I think that, in the question, you are saying that perhaps we should endeavour to create the circumstances that will encourage it. I am aware that the Housing Executive certainly makes an effort to ensure that there is

integrated housing. It is maybe not on a scale that you feel is adequate; however, it is very difficult to put someone into a house when they specifically state that it is not in the area in which they want to live. I know that the Member is not advocating that, but that is a reality.

Mr Campbell: The Minister referred to the £6.7 billion that would be required over 30 years. He, obviously, had an exceptionally difficult task when determining whether an increase would be due in Housing Executive rents. Will he state how and why he came to that decision, given that there are many vulnerable people who work and pay their full rent and will, I am sure, be well pleased that the rental increase is zero this year?

Lord Morrow: I thank Mr Campbell for his question. It is a reasonable question to ask, bearing in mind that there has been no rent increase. I suspect that, while he asks the question, others might have had it going through their head also.

Following the policy decision to cut social rents in England, Her Majesty's Treasury indicated that the devolved Administrations would be expected to identify proportionate savings in relation to housing benefit. In the light of that, I decided to freeze Northern Ireland Housing Executive rents for 2016-17 and recommended that housing associations should also apply a rent freeze. I am keenly aware of the impact of the decision on the Housing Executive and its maintenance programme, and officials will continue to engage with HM Treasury as a priority.

1.00 pm

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement. There has been a bit of shadow-boxing going on over the past four years over the future structures for social housing. I hope that today's statement lays out the needs and concerns for any new Assembly.

One of the issues that the Minister touched on was the Housing Executive stock, which is 88,000. That number continues to dwindle and needs to be protected. Will the Minister consider asking for a suspension of the house sale schemes as a way of protecting the 88,000 until such a time as we get back on track with providing enough housing for people?

Mr Speaker: Minister, we will change the Table while you speak, if you do not mind.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Lord Morrow: Mr Deputy Speaker, is it? I can well recall when the decision was taken for Housing Executive tenants to be permitted to buy their own home. I was a councillor in Dungannon at the time, and I was the first on my feet to say that that was a good thing. I still think it is a good thing. I believe that a lot of tenants aspire to one day owning their own home. I believe that it helps to make even better citizens of people, because it gives them a stake in the community in which they live. I have to say it straight that I would not advocate change in that policy. It is a good policy that has served society well over the years. I cannot agree with the Member and say to him that I will advocate that because, on my watch, I will not. What the new Minister does or does not do is another matter, but the truthful answer to your question is that I would not advocate stopping that policy.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answers so far and will follow on from some of the questions earlier about rent and rent increases. What is the current position on the plan to consult on and develop a social housing rent policy?

Lord Morrow: I thank Mr Douglas for his question. Following the UK's summer Budget announcement regarding rent reductions in England, the rent policy consultation was deferred awaiting DFP and HM Treasury advice on the way forward. That remains the position. There is as yet no agreement that the policy should be issued for public consultation.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister's statement rightly highlights that society needs to have:

"full confidence ... in fair and equal access to housing based on objective assessment of need".

How does the Minister square that with the ministerial involvement of his predecessor, Nelson McCausland, interfering in where social houses are built for political, parading or electoral reasons? Does he accept that the building and allocation of social housing should be based on objective need rather than on any other determining factors?

Lord Morrow: I am not aware of any incident where housing is not based on social and objective need. If the Member has evidence of that and comes to talk to me to highlight the areas about which he is concerned, I am ready to listen to him, but I have no evidence of anything in relation to what he has said today.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for his statement. I heard the answer you gave to the Chairman of the Committee, but I still cannot help think that this is a warning to us that this is the start of the privatisation of the Housing Executive.

Lord Morrow: I thank Mr McQuillan for his question. I want to say to him quite clearly that this is not the thin end of the wedge. I said earlier that this is not about privatisation; it is about finding a sustainable delivery model for tenants in Northern Ireland by which the clearly articulated aspiration of the Housing Executive to be a modern, progressive landlord can be achieved. That is what my statement is all about. There are no hidden agendas in it at all, and it should be taken as read. I can assure the Member that this is not the thin end of the wedge.

Mr Allister: The depth of the problems is quite staggering. We are told that, in the next generation, £6.7 billion will be required to be spent on Housing Executive properties. That prompts this question: who has been in charge for the last five years, that we have got to this point? Maybe the Minister would tell us whether he thinks things might have been better and different had there been more ministerial focus on these issues rather than on false allegations about maintenance contractors and about Red Sky shenanigans and cover-ups. If Ministers had kept their eye on the ball, might things have been a bit better?

Mr Campbell: Two years of a wasted inquiry.

Lord Morrow: I do not know whether the Member will take any assurance from me, but I have not been covering up anything. To start with, I have not been there long enough to cover up anything anyway. The situation that our housing stock is in did not happen overnight. The Member talks about five years; I can tell him that it will take more

than five years. We are talking about a programme that is designed to deal with housing up to 2020 and then up to 2030. I do not think that there has been neglect on the part of Ministers of the past; rather, it has maybe been something to do with the lack of funding, which is not going to get any better in the days ahead. That is why we have to bring new thinking to this subject entirely.

Mr Campbell: From Westminster, where he would like us to go back to.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I remind Members, please, not to make remarks from a sedentary position, even though we may be in the last couple of days.

Executive Committee Business

Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill: Further Consideration Stage

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I call the Minister for Regional Development, Miss Michelle McIlveen, to move the Further Consideration Stage of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill.

Moved. — [Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development).]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): As no amendments have been selected, there is no opportunity to discuss the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill today. Members will, of course, be able to have a full debate at Final Stage. The Further Consideration Stage of the Bill is, therefore, concluded. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Justice (No. 2) Bill: Final Stage

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the Justice (No. 2) Bill [NIA 57/11-16] do now pass.

I am pleased to bring the Final Stage of the Bill to the Assembly, as it contains some of the most significant reforms to the justice system not only during my time as Minister but, perhaps, in decades. It does not seem that long ago that I was speaking at Final Stage of the first justice legislation to be taken in this Chamber for almost 40 years. We are now just a week short of five years and five Bills later, or six Bills if we include the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, introduced by Lord Morrow, in which my Department played a substantial role.

The Justice (No.2) Bill delivers further progress towards what I stated would be my aims as Justice Minister, which were to reform our criminal justice system into a better one for all concerned; to deliver a fairer, more responsive and accountable process; and to bring forward legislative reform in a structured and focused manner.

With your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, it may be opportune to remind the House of the justice legislation that I have brought to the Assembly during this mandate and the positive outcomes that that has delivered for the people of Northern Ireland. The Criminal Justice Act 2013 improved sex offender monitoring and notification arrangements and created a new framework for fingerprint and DNA retention. The Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Act 2014 opened a new chapter in the management of legal aid through the creation of the Legal Services Agency. The Justice Act 2015 improved services for victims and witnesses of crime in the form of new victims and witness charters, a legal entitlement to provide a victim personal statement to the court and powers to provide for the sharing of victim information between justice agencies. In addition, public protection and safeguarding arrangements were significantly improved through the introduction of violent offences prevention orders, domestic violence prevention notices and orders, and a new child protection disclosure scheme, which, as I said in response to a point by Paul Frew, became fully operational from today. Furthermore, a number of measures to speed up the justice system were introduced. Provision was made for the establishment of a single territorial jurisdiction for courts. A number of improvements were made to the arrangements for the disclosure of criminal record checks. It is in that context of reform and re-engineering that the Bill is before the House today at Final Stage.

Before I discuss the content of the Bill, I will take a few moments to record formally my thanks to all those who helped to shape the Bill and assisted in its successful passage to this stage. I place on record my thanks to the Committee for Justice for its detailed work, yet again, on the scrutiny of the Bill. In particular, I thank Alastair Ross and Raymond McCartney — the Chair and Deputy Chair — for their work. I also thank the Committee's officials for the work that they do with my officials behind the scenes to make Committee Stage run smoothly. I am pleased that there is a positive collaborative working relationship between the Department and the Committee. I am particularly pleased, given the difficult issues that are considered by

the Department of Justice. I know that Committee members and officials have a good appreciation of each other's professionalism and desire to bring forward the best law possible. To that end, I also thank the many officials in my Department who developed the content of the Bill — not all of whom are in the Officials' Box beside you at the moment, Mr Deputy Speaker — those who presented evidence to the Committee and those who worked with Members when it was needed to enhance the amendments that were suggested by Mr Ross and Mr Frew. I also thank the Assembly officials, who played an important part in assisting with the Bill's progress through the various stages in the House. I say a particular word of thanks to the Office of the Legislative Counsel for its exceptional work in drafting such complex legislation for introduction and for its efforts in drafting amendments for Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage. Although its contribution is unseen by the public at large, it is the glue that holds together the legislative business in this place. The work is unseen, but it certainly should not be unsung.

I do not intend to outline in detail all the Bill's provisions, but I remind the House of its main content. At introduction, the Bill had 47 clauses and three schedules. Today, that has risen to 61 clauses and five schedules. First and foremost, the Bill creates a radically reformed approach to the collection and enforcement of financial penalties. It increases options for offenders to manage and pay their fines, and it increases the opportunity for non-custodial community disposals instead of imprisonment when a person does not pay a fine. As well as providing better options for debtors who cannot pay their fine, the Bill provides tougher sanctions for wilful defaulters when it is clear that they will not pay. Those include, in certain circumstances, the provision to access a debtor's bank accounts directly and to seize vehicles.

Those changes will bring about a much improved fine collection process for all concerned, freeing up valuable time in the Police Service and the Prison Service. They will reduce the likelihood of people ending up in prison for short periods and maintain the credibility of the fine itself, which is a core part of court sentencing. In short, the provisions set out in Part 1 will deliver a better and fairer fine collection and enforcement system for all concerned.

The Bill delivers on a long-term goal of mine to place the Prisoner Ombudsman on a statutory footing, enshrining the ombudsman's functions, some of which are carried out on a non-statutory basis at this stage, in legislation and to reinforce further his independence from the Prison Service. There are other prison provisions for a voluntary early removal scheme to allow foreign national prisoners who are already subject to compulsory removal from the United Kingdom to have their sentence reduced to facilitate early removal.

Across the community, there is widespread concern about animal welfare, which was shown by the passing of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and has been reinforced since by concerns arising from a number of court cases.

I am, therefore, very pleased that we have improved animal welfare in the Bill by increasing the maximum penalties for the most serious offences of animal cruelty and by ensuring that Northern Ireland has the toughest penalties of any region in these islands for those reprehensible crimes. It is a good example of very positive

cooperation between my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development building on public concern.

1.15 pm

Mr McCarthy: I am very grateful to the Minister for giving way. Would the Minister agree with me that the incident that occurred in Northern Ireland last week where a pussycat was set on fire was a horrendous act and that those responsible, if and when they are caught, deserve to face the full rigour of the law so that that will be a deterrent and ensure that this never ever happens again?

Mr Ford: I certainly agree with my colleague's sentiments. I am not sure that I can agree that it will never happen again, but, certainly, the penalties provided for in this Bill will ensure that those who carry out such acts will face significant penalties, whether significant fines or, potentially, lengthy custodial sentences.

Of course, we should not be concerned just about animal welfare. Public protection and safeguarding measures are enhanced by the creation of new offences, such as possession of extreme pornographic images, the new arrangements for lay visitors to all police stations, the Committee's provisions introduced by Mr Ross on revenge pornography, and Mr Frew's amendments on attacks on ambulance workers. I was happy to support the inclusion of these in the Bill and pleased that the House supported them.

Finally, the Bill closes a potential lacuna with the direct committal for trial provisions in section 9 of the Justice Act 2015, establishes a fee structure for the Court Funds Office, and last, but by no means least in the eyes of some Members, substantially reforms arrangements for firearms licensing. Taken as individual policy areas or groupings of similar policy intent, I believe that all the provisions in the Bill are noteworthy in their own right.

Taken collectively, the Bill will have strategic significance and operational importance across our justice system, delivering a system that is more effective and efficient, fairer and better. This is another important step forward in my programme of justice reform. While it will be for others to judge my performance as Justice Minister — I have no doubt that that will come over the coming weeks — I personally take a great deal of pride in the fact that, over the last five years, the Department of Justice has unarguably delivered substantial reform.

I also take a great deal of pride in the fact that, working with Members from all parts of the House, our justice system is in a better and stronger place than it was in April 2010 after 38 years of direct rule. That is particularly pleasant when we consider the difficult matters that are dealt with by the Department of Justice and the way in which we have largely been able to work together constructively. As I have already said, the Committee, as well as other Members of the House, has played its part in that, working with the Department. I believe that the Bill is an example of putting the vision that I set out earlier into practical action for the benefit of our people. On that basis, I commend the Justice (No. 2) Bill to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): On behalf of the Committee for Justice, I welcome the Final Stage of the Justice (No. 2) Bill. The Bill has undergone extensive and detailed scrutiny and debate, during both Committee Stage and the lengthy debate at

Consideration Stage. That has resulted in a large number of amendments being made and a range of new provisions being added, which have improved and strengthened the legislation before us.

The Bill will bring about significant and long-awaited reform of the arrangements for the collection and enforcement of financial penalties. The Committee welcomes the improvements that, when the Bill is enacted, will no doubt make a major difference to the way that fines are collected and enforced in Northern Ireland. The anticipated benefits, as outlined by the Department to the Committee, include an increase in the current level of payment rates, savings in police resources, and a reduction in the committal rate to prison due to non-payment of fines with the resultant cost savings that that will bring.

While concerns were raised about the potential impact of the options available to secure the payment of fines through deductions from benefits, attachment of earnings orders, interim bank account orders and bank account orders, and, in particular, the potential impact on dependants and families of fine defaulters, I believe that the Bill, as it stands today, has achieved an appropriate balance between providing methods of enforcing financial penalties and providing safeguards to mitigate any adverse impact and ensure sufficient protection for vulnerable individuals or dependants. The additional clarification given by the Minister at Consideration Stage should also reassure Members who continue to have concerns.

The Committee has also recommended to the next Justice Committee that it should monitor the implementation of this legislation and, in particular, its impact, whether the expected benefits materialise, and the progress made by the Department to take forward the work in response to the Committee's proposal to provide the court with powers to require offenders to satisfy a fine by undertaking appropriate courses to address the causes of offending behaviour, such as treatment for drug or alcohol addiction or mental health treatment as an alternative to supervised activity orders, which the Minister gave an undertaking to do at Consideration Stage and which he acknowledged had the potential to enhance the fine collection and enforcement arrangements. That proposal represents the problem-solving model of justice and should be helpful to the Department's stated aim of addressing offending behaviour and reducing reoffending.

The Bill also places the Prisoner Ombudsman on a statutory footing. The Committee's detailed scrutiny resulted in a range of issues being raised and discussed with the Department. The amendments that have been made that provide the Prisoner Ombudsman with the power to initiate investigations on his own volition and place a duty on the Minister of Justice to request that the ombudsman conduct an investigation in cases of near death have, in my view, strengthened the arrangements.

The Committee also welcomes the fact that the Minister took on board its views regarding clauses such as clause 45 and indicated his intention at an early stage to remove that clause from the Bill and replace it with a power to make ancillary provisions under more restricted circumstances limited to the fine collection and enforcement provisions. He was supported by the Assembly in doing that.

Turning to the new provisions in the Bill, the Committee was particularly pleased to gain the support of the Assembly for its amendment that creates a new offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress, commonly known as revenge porn. The new offence will assist the police and the Public Prosecution Service in tackling that obnoxious crime, send a clear message to perpetrators that such behaviour will not be tolerated and, hopefully, provide some reassurance to victims that that type of crime is being taken seriously by legislators.

That is an example of the Committee and the Assembly recognising emerging threats from changing technologies and moving quickly to ensure legislation is up to date and able to meet such challenges. We also appreciate the undertaking given by the Minister to consult on possible legislative changes considered by the Committee, following our very successful conference on justice in the digital age. Those measures would improve online protection for children and include an amendment to the current law so that children or young people under 18 who take, make, distribute or possess an image of themselves will commit no criminal offence unless it is done with malicious intent.

Another change would be an amendment to existing law, or the creation of a new law, to deal with the aggravated impact when an individual or individuals use the anonymity provided by the Internet and/or the ability to create multiple online accounts to harass another person. There could also be the creation of a new law to prohibit an individual of 18 or over from masquerading as someone below that age and engaging online with an individual whom they know or believe to be under the age of 18. The Committee looks forward to early progress being made on all those areas with the new Minister.

The Committee also welcomes the changes made to the firearms legislation, which have been long awaited by the key stakeholders. It also welcomes the increases to the statutory maximum penalties for a range of animal cruelty offences under the Welfare of Animals Act, which provide some of the toughest penalties for animal cruelty offences of any jurisdiction in these islands. We also welcome the enhanced protection for ambulance staff and paramedics responding to emergencies, for which I congratulate my colleague Mr Frew. The incident that occurred on 4 March in Ballycastle, when a paramedic was badly bitten, highlights the all too common dangers faced by paramedics when they attend calls. The recent case of animal cruelty to a family pet, which Mr McCarthy mentioned in an intervention to the Minister, illustrates the necessity of the legislative changes that we have included in the Bill.

I place on record again the appreciation of the Committee to all the organisations and stakeholders who contributed to the legislative process by taking the time to provide oral and written evidence at Committee Stage. I also thank Members for their diligence, commitment and scrutiny and for their contributions at Committee Stage.

The Committee has undertaken an impressive workload that has contributed to the development and improvement of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland, not least through the recent report that we completed on justice in the 21st century, which makes a series of recommendations regarding innovative approaches that could be adopted in Northern Ireland.

I thank the Minister and his officials for working closely and constructively with the Committee during the passage of the Bill. On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to support the Final Stage of the Justice (No. 2) Bill, and I commend it to the House.

This is the last occasion on which I will speak to the House as Chairman of the Justice Committee, certainly in this mandate. I put on record my thanks to my Deputy Chair and the other members of the Committee for the work that we have engaged in during my time as Chairman. I mention in particular Ms Bronwyn McGahan, who is standing down and not seeking re-election, and Mr Alban Maginness, who is retiring after a lengthy time as a public servant.

He has made an invaluable contribution to the Committee over all his years on it. His knowledge of, and expertise in, the legal system has been of great value to all members. I want to put that on record.

I have enjoyed my time as Chairperson of the Committee over the last 15 months. We have played a very constructive role in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. We have, on a collegiate basis, come up with a number of absolutely achievable recommendations that we believe should be part of the next Programme for Government. It is particularly pleasing that we have managed to get a level of consensus in those areas.

I know that the Minister will not be seeking renomination in May. I think that he has one of the most difficult jobs in the Executive. There are pressures put on the Justice Minister that other Ministers do not face, and there has been a big impact on his life from such a difficult portfolio. Not always over the last six years have my party and he agreed, but I want to put on record that, during my time as Justice Chairperson, I found the Minister to be incredibly courteous. I think that we have demonstrated how, when Committee and Minister work together, we can improve legislation and bring about really positive change in Northern Ireland. I wish him well in whatever he chooses to do, or wherever he chooses to go, in the next 12 months.

I shall leave it at that. I look forward to listening to other Members' contributions. Again, I thank everybody involved in putting the Bill into the form that it is in. It is a great improvement on where we started off from and will make a difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also welcome the Final Stage of the Justice (No. 2) Bill.

The Chair has laid out in very great detail aspects of the Bill. From my party's point of view, I welcome the fact that the Minister has addressed the issue of fines. We know from many presentations over many years in the Committee that this has become both an issue for the Department and a burden on the Prison Service. I want to acknowledge the work that the Department and the Minister have done on this, particularly by looking at a range of options to make it easier for people to pay fines, being mindful of the most vulnerable, who sometimes find that difficult. The appropriate measures are now in place, as are appropriate sanctions for those who choose not to pay, even though everyone knows that they have the ability. I think that we have struck the right balance.

It is also fair to say that there was universal approval for putting the Prison Ombudsman on a statutory footing.

For many years, many of us felt that that was necessary. Indeed, as it progressed, the Bill was added to, making the office better and stronger and one that we can all have total confidence in going forward.

Just by way of a footnote, it was interesting that, on 24 February, Jim Allister tried to introduce an amendment to the Bill. Whether he realised it or not, it was maybe the first time he accepted that there was such a thing as a conflict-related incident. That is usually the first step in recognising that there were political prisoners. I am not sure whether he intended that to be the case.

In conclusion, I echo the words of the Chair. Given that this is my last opportunity — I do not assume that I will be called at Question Time — I put on record our party's thanks to the Chair for the way he carried out the business. I also want to acknowledge our party colleague Bronwyn McGahan, who is leaving, and Alban Maginness, who has been on the Justice Committee from its inception and, as the Chair said, has been very wise and well informed, particularly when it came to dealing with legal aid and similar issues. I also want to put on record our thanks to the departmental officials, and not just in relation to the Bill. Every time they came in front of the Committee, they ensured that they could answer our questions and gave us as much information as possible. I also acknowledge the role of the Committee staff who, in liaising with the Department and informing the Committee, did a first-class job.

1.30 pm

I realise that David Ford will be up again for Question Time this afternoon, but, like the Chair, I want to acknowledge his work. There is no doubt that his Department is a heavy burden. There have been many issues that needed to be grappled with, and I think that the Minister has dealt with them in a very professional way. From a Committee point of view, and from our party's point of view, he has always been very receptive and very willing to engage and have meetings, sometimes at very short notice. When I say "receptive", I mean that he may have been receptive to bringing us in; I am not saying he always agreed with everything and every bit of advice; but sure, if that was the case, it would be no fun, so to speak.

From our party's perspective, whatever he chooses to do in the future, we certainly wish him all the best.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. The SDLP welcomes the Bill in its final form and has been supportive of its different provisions. We also welcome the way in which the Bill has been refined by the Committee and the Assembly. I think it has been an important contribution to the legislative process and that the work the Committee has done with the Department and the Minister on justice issues has been consistently positive, worthwhile and very constructive in producing good legislation and, indeed, good policy decisions on the part of the Department. That is very important. I reiterate my support for the way in which the Chair chaired the Committee and gave leadership on all sorts of issues. On this legislation, he helped to put forcefully the views of the Committee to the Assembly, the Minister and the Department of Justice, and I compliment him on his work. It has been very positive.

Of course, the Deputy Chair, Mr McCartney, has played a leading role in the Committee and its work and in making

sure that it was a very constructive part of the Assembly. Sometimes I think that the Assembly at large should take note of the work that we have done in the Committee and try to emulate it. That is because it has been very positive, and there has been constructive engagement very largely on a non-partisan basis. That is very important. It does not mean that we are no longer politicians or members of Sinn Féin, the DUP, the SDLP or whatever; we are still politicians, but we are trying to get things right. This Bill is a good example of getting things right.

However, I will say this to the Assembly: it has performed, not to my liking and not to my party's liking, but it has performed and has achieved certain things. It could achieve an awful lot better: that is the point I want to make. It could be more dynamic, more constructive and could achieve what all of us in politics want to achieve, which is to bring about real peace and reconciliation amongst our people. That is probably outside the confines of this Bill; nonetheless, I think we should all aspire to that. Anything that narrows difference, which the Bill does, will bring that about.

I say to those who will be part of the next Assembly that they should step up to the mark and reinforce these efforts to try to achieve genuine consensus and a genuine partnership between nationalists and unionists, Catholics and Protestants. I think it is vital that those in the next mandate do that seriously.

The other thing I wanted to say — this is reflected in the Bill — is that, to a great extent, we work in slow motion in this House. The proposal for putting what is now called the Prison Ombudsman on a statutory footing was proposed at Hillsborough, and that was in 2010, if I remember correctly. Six years later, we are doing that. We really ought to do better than that. We ought to be faster in what we try to do in the House. Six years is inappropriate to establish the role of Prison Ombudsman on a statutory basis. Therein lies a lesson, which is that we must move faster than we have done in the past.

I want to take this opportunity — probably my last opportunity — to pay tribute to the work of the Minister. I have to say that I am still not reconciled to the methodology by which we arrived at having a Minister of Justice, but nonetheless David Ford has performed well in office, and his efforts should be appreciated by all. That does not mean to say that we approve of everything that the Minister has done. It was clear, when we disagreed with him in relation to parts of this Bill, that that was so, but it would be wrong not to acknowledge his good work. I know that he has indicated that he will not be Minister of Justice in the next mandate, so I wish him well in whatever other function he carries out in the Assembly and within his own party.

I also put on record the work of Bronwyn McGahan on the Committee. I know that she is not here, but it is important that we acknowledge the work that she has done.

The media, and people outside here, probably do not realise the significance of the Justice (No. 2) Bill, but it is significant. The reason why is that, if it is properly and fully implemented, the new fines collection system will mean thousands of people will not go to prison. Space will be freed up. The pressure on the prison system, which is suffering very considerable pressures, will be eased, and, as a result, we will be able to use the resources available. That is very important. Therefore, this is not an

insignificant piece of legislation. It may look rather complex and inconsequential, but it is important to remember exactly what is intended to be achieved by it.

The other point that I will make about the Prison Ombudsman is this: the Prison Ombudsman will play a very important role in easing some of the other pressures in prisons. The fact that the role will be on a statutory basis and his functions properly defined and, I hope, properly resourced means that some of those pressures will diminish. That is important to remember.

I also highlight the penalties in the Bill for animal welfare offences, which were clearly inadequate before. Some amendment has been made in relation to that, and that may act as a deterrent. Mr McCarthy quite rightly highlighted the appalling and horrible cruelty shown to a poor animal over the past week. Those who carry out such vile crimes will be severely punished.

We also look at the sterling work carried out by the emergency services, and their workers — particularly ambulance workers — should not be subjected to the type of offences that have occurred. There is an additional protection for them, and I hope that, under clause 54, soon to be section 54, the offence of assaulting ambulance workers etc will provide the necessary protection to them. Again, I want to single out Mr Paul Frew, for pursuing this. I know that Lord Morrow was the original instigator of this, but it performs a fine service to the whole community, emergency workers in particular.

Lastly, I come to the vexed question of firearms. My colleague Mr McGlone is not here, but his collaborator Mr Frew is; they were involved in getting it right for those involved in using firearms for sport. I know nothing about weaponry or firearms. I was going to say that I am a minority in this House — *[Laughter.]* but it would be very wrong to say that, so I withdraw it.

I am not like Mr Frew and Mr McGlone, as I have very little knowledge of firearms. But it was very important to get agreement between those who take part in this sport and the Department. I know it was a very difficult process, which took a long time. I go back to slow motion again: it took a long time to get this agreed. I think that it is worthwhile and important for those involved.

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for giving way and for his comments. I also pay tribute to his colleague Patsy McGlone, who worked tirelessly alongside me on these issues. I learned a lot from Mr McGlone during that time, but it really was an exemplar of how this House should work, because this was an issue that had bedevilled this Assembly from the word go. It took years to resolve, and it took the first Justice Bill and the threats and the laying down of amendments to concentrate minds to the point where all parties — stakeholders, the sports, the industry itself — were able to come together and merge with the Department to actually get something tangible and real.

If Patsy and I were the bridge to that achievement, so be it. It is a very good day for that to be resolved, and I pay tribute to Alban Maginness's colleague Patsy McGlone. I also pay tribute to Alban for all the years that he has been on the Justice Committee. I have learned a lot from Alban Maginness, and I consider him to be a friend. When he leaves this House, he will continue to be my friend, so, thank you.

Mr A Maginness: All I can say to that is, do not go too far. — *[Laughter.]* Thank you very much. It would be very churlish of me not to thank everybody for being so kind to me today.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you. This is probably my final opportunity to thank you for the work that you have done as Deputy Speaker in this Assembly. I think that it is very important to acknowledge the work of Deputy Speakers and you, in particular. You have served the Assembly with great industry and great conscientiousness, and I think it would be remiss not to mention that today, so thank you very much indeed.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Thank you very much.

Mr Kennedy: I want to join with others and give a broad welcome to the fact that the Justice (No. 2) Bill is in its Final Stage today and will shortly pass through the House. For the 61 clauses and the 5 schedules, I think progress has been made.

There is still work to be done on the overall issue of the regulation of financial penalties and tougher sentences for those who refuse to pay fines. We have to find better ways of dealing with the non-payment of fines in cases relating to TV licensing, for instance, and others, rather than the current option of sending people to jail and the ensuing criminal records and considerable costs involved. That, clearly, will be a matter for the new mandate. I know that progress has been made, particularly for TV licensing.

1.45 pm

We can welcome the fact that the position of ombudsman is now on a statutory footing. I also welcome the fact that penalties for cases of animal cruelty have been increased. I hope very much that whoever was responsible for the disgraceful and despicable attack on the kitten in the Hillsborough area last week will face the full rigour of the law and be subject to increased sanction and penalty as a result of this legislation.

The action that has been taken on revenge porn is welcome. That is in the public interest, as is greater protection for the ambulance workers and medics who provide such an essential service to our community but are subject to attacks by people who ought to know better and ought and deserve to be punished if they are not prepared to learn lessons.

Progress has been made with the Justice (No. 2) Bill. I was a late arrival to this mandate's Justice Committee, but I enjoyed my period of service there. I found it to be a very constructive and hard-working Committee. I pay tribute to the Chair and members for that being the case. We have achieved positive outcomes, even in the Justice (No. 2) Bill.

I do not want to spend too much time on the political love-in that we are engaging in, but I wish to pay tribute to those members of the Committee who have indicated that they are not standing again. I wish them well. The Minister has indicated that he will not seek nomination as Justice Minister in any new mandate. My party and I have not always agreed with the Minister of Justice in aspects of the application of his policies and so on, but I acknowledge and have witnessed at first hand round the Executive table and through the Committee the hard work and dedication with which Mr Ford has applied himself. It is a challenging Department, undoubtedly, and it is subject to what Harold

Macmillan would have described as "Events, dear boy", which adds to the challenge. I wish Mr Ford well in whatever career path he chooses, as a Member of this House or perhaps in other places. I will leave that hanging there.

All in all, progress has been made, but I do not underestimate the challenge for the new Justice Minister and the scrutiny Committee in the new mandate. I hope very much that positive outcomes can be applied. At the latter stage of his contribution, Mr Maginness paid tribute to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I add my personal tribute to you for the service that you have rendered to the House not only as a Deputy Speaker but as a very wise and valued Member.

Mr Dickson: I, too, want to join in the tributes and comments that have been made around the Chamber on where we are today and specifically with regard to the Justice (No. 2) Bill, which is at its Final Stage. I would also like to acknowledge the progress and work of the Justice Minister over the lifetime of the mandate. For me and, I think, for many citizens, he has delivered a fairer and a faster system of justice and has also embarked on wide-ranging legislative reform.

As others said, the Justice (No. 2) Bill modernises and deals with the very difficult issue of collection of penalties and fines and replaces those with a non-custodial model that, nevertheless, seeks to ensure that those who need to be dealt with can be dealt with and that they will have the opportunity to have sufficient resources to lead their lives but, at the same time, know that repayment is being made. That is very important. In-and-out prison sentences serve neither the person who goes to prison nor the Prison Service that has to deal with such individuals.

Likewise, I welcome the statutory footing for the Prison Ombudsman. That is a vital role. They join a range of ombudsmen across Northern Ireland who have a very difficult but important role. That person will, and should, have the confidence of the Prison Service and also of the prisoners who will raise issues with them.

Much has been made of the concerns of the community and society about animal welfare, particularly animal cruelty, where the criminal line is crossed. We have seen a number of cases where the community quite rightly has been outraged by the way in which courts have had to deal with the law and provide for sentencing. That review and revision in the Bill will facilitate those who issue and provide sentences with a wider range of penalties. It sends out a strong message to those in society who abuse animals in the ways in which we have heard and seen in recent days.

I also add words of thanks to Mr Frew for his amendment on those issues that affect ambulance staff particularly and the way in which they have been abused going about their job. There is a difficult area in respect of this. Sometimes where the abuse occurs the individuals are patients who are in a very difficult situation, but a criminal line is also crossed. It is when that criminal line is crossed that Mr Frew's amendments to the legislation are very welcome and much appreciated.

I turn to the issue of firearms reform. Somewhat like Mr Maginness, I did not — fortunately, I have to say — know anything about firearms to the extent that I now know about them having listened to all the discussions and arguments in the Committee for Justice. I cannot say that I

wholly agree with where we are in respect of the changes that have been introduced, but what I have seen is good cooperative and collaborative working between parties in the Committee to reach a situation where the Department of Justice can work with and agree what has been done on firearms reform.

I also commend the Chair of the Committee, both for introducing aspects of revenge pornography to the Bill and for the very innovative and important way in which he has chaired the Committee. Once again, I need to place on record my sincere thanks for the way in which he has done that.

It would be remiss of me at this stage not also to thank Mr Maginness for the important and sage way in which he has advised and worked with the Committee both in private conversation and in the contributions that he has made to the Committee. They really have been immense, and it has been of great value to have a lawyer on the Committee. Mr Maginness also brought his political points of view to the Committee.

All that has been valuable in the mix. I applaud Mr Maginness not only for the work that he has done in this mandate on the Justice Committee but for the work that he has done representing his constituents and as a voice of sanity and reality for many right across this community. You will be missed in the House.

Likewise, I thank Ms McGahan for the contribution that she has made to the Committee and wish her well in whatever she has planned for her future.

There is much to be done in the future in the area of justice. We are not finished yet. While I understand and know, as Chief Whip of the party, that the Minister will not seek the position of Justice Minister in the next mandate, I assure the House that he is seeking to be re-elected to the House and will work on behalf of his party and as the party leader. That is absolutely for sure.

It is important that we acknowledge all the things that people have done, but there is one area that I have to express some disappointment in, and that is the amendment that I and my colleague Mr Lunn proposed with regard to the very specific and very difficult area of the law in relation to fatal foetal abnormality. While I totally and utterly respect the democratic decision of the House with regard to these matters, I have to place it on record that it is an area that, if I am returned to the House, I will continue to pursue, particularly in respect of the issue that faced the young lady, Sarah Ewart, and the tragic way in which it affected her family.

Finally, I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the work that you have done as Deputy Speaker; I place that on record as others have done. I assure the House that, if returned, I will work with my colleagues and others to deliver a better, faster and fairer justice system and that we intend to move that forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): As Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, I suggest that the House takes its ease until then. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be the Minister.

The debate stood suspended.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Speaker: I inform Members that question 9 has been withdrawn.

Brexit: Impact on Local Economy

1. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any discussions he has had with Executive colleagues on the impact on the local economy of Northern Ireland's exit from the European Union. (AQO 9839/11-16)

Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): There have been a number of discussions on the issue. Should the referendum vote result in the UK leaving the EU, that would trigger a period of negotiation on the terms of the future UK relationship with the EU. During that period, the Executive will need to be acutely aware of the exit pathway that is being negotiated between the UK and the EU, as different pathways could have very different legal, policy and practical implications for Northern Ireland.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for that response. What plans does he have to publish an assessment of the impact on the local economy of the exit of Northern Ireland from the European Union? Is the Minister in a position to apprise the House of whether that will happen? It would be of great assistance to those who are undecided, perhaps even himself, on the matter.

Mr Bell: Members will be aware of an independent study by Oxford Economics assessing the economic implications of a EU exit across a wide range of potential scenarios, and I intend to publish that very soon.

Mr Patterson: Can the Minister provide an update on what discussions he has held with local stakeholders, such as the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Manufacturing NI, so that, as economy Minister, he remains able to represent the views of local business leaders?

Mr Bell: I have met the Federation of Small Businesses on a number of occasions. I have met Mr Gavaghan of the CBI. Most recently, I was in Bushmills with the Chamber of Commerce and Ann McGregor. Interestingly, at that function, Ann McGregor said that, on the basis of her conversations with members, the majority of members are for Vote Leave.

Mr McCarthy: On your investment trips abroad, how many potential investors have said to you, Minister, that they would like to see Northern Ireland outside the European Union?

Mr Bell: That question was asked of our largest investor in Northern Ireland in the United States consulate in Belfast. They asked Andrew O'Brien, and he answered very clearly that he had no knowledge that people from the United States would stop investing in Northern Ireland purely on

the basis of the situation with the EU. In all my trips, the three things that come across clearly are that Northern Ireland has one of the best talent pools in the world; that the costs of doing business in Northern Ireland are about 84% of the costs of doing business in the rest of the UK; and that, from 1 April 2018, we will have a corporation tax rate of 12.5%, which is the most competitive rate in western Europe. Those are the three factors that seem to be being taken hold of from Asia to America and throughout the Middle East. It is on that basis that I think that Northern Ireland will continue to grow its economy.

Mr Allister: Does the Minister agree that it would, in fact, be liberating for our trade and enterprise to be free of the shackles of the EU? Instantly, we would be liberated from EU regulation, which, as even the Commission has acknowledged, costs 4% of GDP. Of course, we would be freed to form our own trade deals with the growth parts of the world rather than being tied to the declining EU.

Does the Minister agree, therefore, that it is a positive vision for Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom to leave the EU?

Mr Bell: There are certainly a number of views on the subject. An accusation has been put forward that, despite the UK being a net contributor, Northern Ireland is a winner and we get a better return. People know my party's position, but I think that the argument that we get more out than we put in does not stand up to scrutiny. If we take regional funds, out of which we get dedicated Peace money that no one else gets, we are still operating at a loss. Open Europe estimates that for that pot we get £1 back for every £1.58p we put in. For 2016, the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates a net UK contribution of £9.5 billion. Overall, it forecasts an increase of £3.1 billion in total contributions in the next five years. I imagine that hard-working families will not be any better off financially than they were before that reform process started.

Corporation Tax

2. Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how Invest NI will promote the planned reduction in corporation tax to foreign investors. (AQO 9840/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest Northern Ireland has already begun to promote the planned reduction in corporation tax through targeted communications and marketing activity, digital advertising, print and media partnerships, events, one-to-one meetings and the showcasing of our capability at key international events and exhibitions.

Mr Hilditch: Perhaps the Minister will outline the benefits of lowering corporation tax not only for foreign investors but for local companies investing in Northern Ireland.

Mr Bell: The Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to reducing the rate of corporation tax to 12.5% from 2018 can be a major stimulus for our economy. Research from 'The Economist' shows that we can create in excess of 30,000 jobs and grow our economy by 10% over 15 years. Our attention is now on how we can maximise the potential that exists for that new economic lever. We are trying to get as much insight as we can into new FDI markets that a lower rate will open doors to, what types and sectors of investment we can attract and the parts of the world that we should target. We will work alongside the Department

for Employment and Learning to look at skills. We will add the most competitive rate of corporation tax to a low cost base, estimated to be 48% of the costs of London and 84% of the cost of doing business in the UK, and the fact that people come for our costs. I will give you something that impressed me from Tom Hall, vice-president of international technology and operations at Allstate:

"Our experience in Northern Ireland far exceeded our expectations. We came here originally for the cost savings. We find ourselves staying for the people and the talent that is available."

As they said to me:

"We came for your costs but we stayed for your people."

Mr McMullan: Does the Minister agree that targets relating to regional opportunities need to be incorporated into Invest NI's new push for foreign direct investment?

Mr Bell: No. The Member's party was a party to the Programme for Government, and what we set forward in that Programme for Government was that we would look at Northern Ireland as a whole. That is the target that we set Invest Northern Ireland, and it vastly exceeded it in jobs created, research and development and the jobs growth fund. I do not think I could ever turn away business, jobs and investment from Northern Ireland purely on the basis that they would not go to a geographical location. It would be a foolish person who would do so.

Mr McCallister: The Minister will be aware of a recent survey by KPMG about executive attitudes. The UK ranked second highest in Europe, mainly around political stability, macroeconomic stability and access to the single market. How does he think Northern Ireland would fare in such a survey?

Mr Bell: Anybody looking at Northern Ireland today will know that one of the biggest factors that business looks towards in a survey is stability. Recently, I did a conference with Professor James McElnay at Queen's on manufacturing. He put up a graphic behind me of United Nations figures to show how safe Northern Ireland was. In particular, Belfast was ranked as the second safest city in the world, second only to Tokyo. We are there on stability and safety. Secondly, we are also there on costs. The Member will know that another major survey in the 'Financial Times' shows that Northern Ireland is the most entrepreneurial region in the United Kingdom. There are business surveys that show that, compared with any other part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland is the place to grow your business quickly and quickest to £1 million. Northern Ireland is the financial technology capital of the world, according to the 'Financial Times'. Those are the surveys that we are looking to, and it behoves all of us in the House who set in the Programme for Government our economy as the central priority to look at how we have exceeded every target on job creation, research and development and the jobs growth fund to see how we can continue to accelerate the progress that has been made.

Mr Swann: Minister, in your earlier answer you referred to foreign investors coming because they come for the costs. The Enterprise Bill currently going through Westminster will see a tax of 0.5% put on companies' wage bills if they have a wage bill of more than £3 million. How will that affect Northern Ireland's attractiveness compared with

the Republic of Ireland, which will not have such a tax on companies' wage bills?

Mr Bell: There are many challenges to us, and the Member has raised one of them. Up until 2014, we used to boast that we attracted more foreign direct investment than any other part of the United Kingdom with the exception of London. Everyone said, "Jonathan, you can never exceed London. You have reached your high-water mark"; yet, somewhere around August 2014, Northern Ireland overtook the rest of the United Kingdom in attracting foreign direct investment per person.

Last week, I was sitting down with some executives from Citigroup. Remember, it came to put 369 jobs into Northern Ireland, and today the number sits at over 2,000. In particular, I looked with them at the research that shows that 80% of the companies that have come to Northern Ireland with foreign direct investment have subsequently reinvested. That, to me, is the ultimate test. When people come and invest, they see our costs and the quality of the workforce. They see the very low attrition rate because we have very loyal working people, and they see into the future the growth that there will be in Northern Ireland. I think that 80% of foreign direct investment reinvesting in Northern Ireland is the ultimate vote of confidence that we want to share.

Manufacturing: DETI Assistance

3. **Mr Poots** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how his Department is working to promote and assist local manufacturing. (AQO 9841/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Department is carrying out a range of initiatives to work and promote and to assist local manufacturing. Companies that are involved in manufacturing now employ over 80,000 people, and the sector remains hugely important to the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr Poots: I thank the Minister for his answer. Our First Minister, who had many years in the job that Mr Bell now holds, will be out leading in the United States this week, selling Northern Ireland and its job potential to businesses in the United States.

Over the next number of years, lower corporation tax will be significantly important, but what are we planning in association with it? What are we planning to do for training, employment and our universities, particularly as Departments come together? How can we ensure that we put out an absolutely enhanced package to business to show that Northern Ireland is the best place to invest?

2.15 pm

Mr Bell: As for Northern Ireland being the best place to invest, the first thing that I do is bring companies to Northern Ireland. I speak to them at the end of their journey. Their journey starts, however, with some of the successful companies: Allstate; Citi; Baker and McKenzie; and Allen and Overy. The list could go on. We let them talk to those people first, and then we talk about the support that we in the Government can give.

The Member is absolutely correct: we then turn to education. According to another major survey, Northern Ireland has the best performing education system for primary maths in Europe and the sixth best in the world. The Member raised the question of skills. More than 8,500

people graduate annually with business-related degrees from Northern Ireland, where we have two world-class universities, which the Member mentioned. I think that we should note that Queen's University Belfast is over 100 years old, is a member of the Russell Group of 24 leading, research-intensive universities and is ranked in the top 1% of universities worldwide. Ulster University, with its four campuses, catering for some 27,000 students, includes one of the largest provisions in computing in the UK and Ireland, and it is ranked in the world's top 100 young universities. We bring together world-leading research and are recognised for our technology-related university research centres. I am thinking of the Intelligent Systems Research Centre at Ulster University or the Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology at Queen's. We should note that over 70% of Northern Ireland's university research activity is world leading or internationally excellent, according to the Research Excellence Framework. Those are the structures that we combine with costs, talent and the most competitive rate of corporation tax to move Northern Ireland forward.

Mr Patterson: I note with interest the Minister's responses thus far. Manufacturing NI has consistently asked for a manufacturing strategy. However, like it, I am deeply disappointed that successive Enterprise, Trade and Investment Ministers have overlooked this key sector. With manufacturing being a key employer in my constituency, will the Minister give a commitment that he will ensure that the next Programme for Government contains a pledge for such a strategy?

Mr Bell: If the Member had been listening in the last couple of weeks, he would have heard me telling the Assembly that we were placing manufacturing at the heart of our refreshed economic approach. The Member may be disappointed, but while his party was in the Executive, it agreed with a Programme for Government that placed manufacturing with all the other parts in one economic strategy. We did not go down the road of having an economic strategy for financial services, an economic strategy food and drink or an economic strategy for technology. Instead, we put them all together into one economic strategy, which his party agreed with.

From 2011-12 to September 2015, Invest Northern Ireland has provided some £255 million of assistance to firms that are involved in manufacturing in Northern Ireland across a range of sectors — £16.7 million or 7% more than was provided to service-based firms. In terms of support, that helped to promote over 12,000 new manufacturing jobs, 3,600 of which have, in the last financial year, provided future opportunities for those affected by the very challenging situation that we found ourselves in as a result of job losses. Having topped 80,000 manufacturing jobs in Northern Ireland and seeing in the past a growth rate greater than any other part of the United Kingdom, you can see why I believe in Northern Ireland manufacturing and why it should be part of the refreshed strategy.

Exploration Licences

4. **Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many petroleum and natural gas exploration licences are operational in Northern Ireland. (AQO 9842/11-16)

7. Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that the company failed to meet its original work programme targets, why his Department extended the petroleum licence awarded to InfraStrata. (AQO 9845/11-16)

Mr Bell: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 4 and 7 together. One petroleum licence is currently operational in Northern Ireland — petroleum licence PL 1/10 — for which InfraStrata plc is the licence holder. Petroleum licence PL 1/10 was not extended.

Mr McNarry: I trust that the Minister will agree that it is a no-brainer, with energy gold under our own feet, not to use it. Will he say, in the light of his previous answers, what new funding his Department could bid for after 23 June for the development of energy?

Mr Bell: We are working very closely with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). In everything that I have done in energy, I have sought to ensure that Northern Ireland and its people get the best return for their investment, both in security of supply and cost. As DECC has changed its position on a number of occasions, I have also changed mine. I think that it is a very foolish person who does not change their mind when the facts change. We hit all our renewables targets, and energy prices in Northern Ireland were quite significantly lower compared with other years. In recent times, you will have seen the list of companies that are reducing their energy prices. It is key for my Department to maximise every opportunity that we have in order to be good stewards of the earth and to look towards where we can not only attract support for renewables but make sure that our manufacturing industry gets the most competitive rate that allows it to stay competitive and export more.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. The licence has not been extended, but does the Minister accept that the decision to extend InfraStrata's time frame for a work programme sets a dangerous precedent on fracking, particularly given that InfraStrata failed to meet its original work programme? Will he outline why he feels that it was appropriate to extend that time frame and give such a company such latitude to drill boreholes, using a novel form of drilling, so close to public water reservoirs?

Mr Bell: The Member should reflect carefully on what he is saying. It is not true, in whatever way it is expressed, that InfraStrata has been given more time by DETI to drill at Woodburn, when the company had clearly failed to meet its original work programme targets. That is the allegation. I was content to agree to a variation of the work programme of petroleum licence PL 1/10, and that was based on work that was carried out by the licensee to date to a highly professional standard, including but not limited to the acquisition, processing, reprocessing and interpretation of existing and new 2D seismic reflection data and the carrying out of studies, mapping and remodelling. The extent to which the factors that were impacting on the licensee's capacity to drill were outside the licensee's control.

The Member raised the issue of fracking, and it is important to state that my Department has issued no licences or permits for high-volume hydraulic fracturing. No company in Northern Ireland has been given permission

to frack. InfraStrata has made it clear that the drilling in Woodburn forest does not involve fracking, and a no-fracking clause has been included in InfraStrata plc's lease with Northern Ireland Water.

Mr Lyons: I thank the Minister for what he has said. There is a lot of concern in Woodburn about the issue, much of it coming from misinformation being spread so that an awful lot of people are under the illusion that fracking is taking place. I am very pleased that the Minister has confirmed that no fracking is taking place in this area. Does he believe that this sort of misinformation is useful?

Mr Bell: Misinformation, as we all know, can be very dangerous. I thank Mr Lyons. He has been on to me on a number of occasions with concerns that have been raised. Let me tell you specifically, from the Dispatch Box, that my Department has not issued any licence or permit for high-volume hydraulic fracturing.

We have not done it, and no company has been given permission in Northern Ireland to frack. As both the previous DETI Minister and I have indicated on many occasions, high-volume hydraulic fracturing is a novel and controversial issue and, as such, is a matter for the Executive as a whole to decide on, should the time come.

Mr McCrossan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. How many of the sites being explored under licence are anticipated to require unconventional extraction techniques, such as hydraulic fracturing?

Mr Bell: There is always a danger of writing your question before you have heard the answers. However, let me be clear that what we are saying about high-volume hydraulic fracturing is that it is a novel and controversial issue and, as such, should the time come, it will be for the Executive as a whole to decide.

Mr Beggs: The Minister has said that he has varied the licence, but that will have the effect of extending the operation and will enable drilling and the associated chemicals to be located in the water catchment area of the Woodburn dams. Given that a high-quality water supply is important not only to people but to local manufacturing companies, what discussions has the Minister had with other Departments to satisfy himself that there is no danger to the public water supply should something go amiss during the drilling process, in which a considerable number of chemicals will be injected into the ground?

Mr Bell: That issue has been raised. The Department and the other Departments — they have answered for themselves on these matters from the Dispatch Box — have indicated that obviously, if there was any risk to the water supply, action would be taken. We are satisfied, from the information that we have, that those levels of risk are not there. The Member should reflect that there is a potential benefit to Northern Ireland of having the prospectivity of the licence area established through drilling because the development of Northern Ireland's indigenous oil and gas resources could help to maintain security of supply and could bring direct and indirect economic benefit to Northern Ireland.

Mr Dickson: In respect of the drilling at Woodburn, it is a bit of a smokescreen to suggest that people believe that hydraulic fracking is going on. We know that it is conventional drilling, and the protesters know that too.

You talk about security of supply for fuel, but can we be guaranteed security of supply when it comes to clean, fresh drinking water?

Mr Bell: I refer to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Energy Policy

5. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how he plans to bring certainty to local energy policy to ensure sufficient energy generation capacity and competitive energy prices. (AQO 9843/11-16)

Mr Bell: Energy policy is driven by finding the best balance between sustainability, cost and supply; that is what we refer to as the energy trilemma.

There are no immediate concerns about security of electricity supply in the short or medium term. My Department supports the delivery of the North/South interconnector and new market trading arrangements as measures to ensure long-term security of supply.

Mr Lyttle: What has the Department done to reduce energy costs for companies in Northern Ireland? How successful has that been in comparison with other European regions?

Mr Bell: Looking at recent electricity and gas tariff reductions, we see that there has been a 10.3% reduction in domestic and small business regulated electricity tariffs, prices that are 16% below the GB "Big Six" average, approximately 25% lower than the average in the Republic of Ireland and 7% lower than the EU 15 average. The SSE Airtricity standard domestic tariff is due to be reduced by 10.3% from 1 June 2016, which should give a typical annual saving of £50 to domestic customers. Electricity Ireland is to cut domestic electricity tariffs by 10% from 21 March 2016, which should give a typical annual saving of approximately £59. SSE Airtricity's standard gas tariff in greater Belfast will be cut by 10.2% from 1 April 2016, producing a typical annual saving of £50. Firmus Energy has confirmed a tariff reduction of up to 9.75% for Belfast customers from 1 April. To conclude, I also welcome Firmus's announcement of a 7.7% reduction in retail gas tariffs for households and small businesses in the 10-towns licence area, also effective from 1 April.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Coleraine Enterprise Zone: DETI Support

T1. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what DETI is doing to support the enterprise zone in Coleraine. (AQT 3641/11-16)

Mr Bell: A number of initiatives have been taken in that area that we have visited, not least of which has been the support for the data centre.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. Further to that, what is DETI doing to explore the possibilities for the expansion of the Kelvin project and on broadband reception and speeds in the Coleraine and wider east Derry area?

Mr Bell: I have been visiting the area, most recently at the invitation of George Robinson. We visited a number of specific projects, and, obviously, we met in connection with the data centre there, which has the potential to be huge in terms of future data needs. We have also been working with BT and other bodies. I visited the business park in Limavady to see how we could prioritise broadband access, particularly for business customers in business parks.

Strabane Business Park: Expressions of Interest

T2. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an assurance that everything that can be done is being done to bring to fruition as quickly as possible recent expressions of interest in the Invest NI business park in Strabane. (AQT 3642/11-16)

Mr Bell: Yes, I give the Member that assurance, and I am happy to meet her in relation to what we are doing. We have a fantastic team in Invest Northern Ireland; I only say "well done" because it did very well and significantly outperformed many of the targets that we have set. The Member makes good points about what can be offered in her region. In the last number of months, Invest Northern Ireland has had discussions with a number of companies regarding their specific interest in locating to Strabane business park. I will keep a watching brief on that in terms of maximising everything that we can do to ensure success.

Ms Boyle: Thank you, a Cheann Comhairle. Given the high levels of unemployment and social deprivation in Strabane, will the Minister elaborate on the work that he and his Department are doing in conjunction with Invest NI to promote Strabane as a location for possible investors, given that there is such a large space there for investors to come to?

Mr Bell: We are looking towards land, particularly in the Strabane business park, that is available to qualifying businesses that have an approved economic development project and an immediate, demonstrable land need. I am sure that the Member will appreciate that, in our current negotiations, to which she alluded in her first question, there are companies that are looking particularly to Strabane business park. I can tell her that we will give them all the evidence as to why it is a quality place in which to invest, as well as the general information that we give to people about prime office rents, education, businesses that can perform here on the world stage and the many endorsements that we get, particularly from foreign direct investment in Northern Ireland.

Let me give you an example. Allstate's executive vice-president of technology and operations, Suren Gupta, said:

"Every day in Northern Ireland we save half a million dollars".

As a result of locating in Northern Ireland 15 years ago, Allstate has saved over a billion dollars.

What we will say to all businesses that are looking at anywhere in Northern Ireland is, "Those are the types of savings that are available. Come and invest with us. We'll give you the best people. We'll give you the best costs, and, from 1 April, we'll give you the best rate of corporation tax in western Europe".

North/South Interconnector

T3. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the campaign to promote the North/South interconnector and to state how great a priority the interconnector is. (AQT 3643/11-16)

Mr Bell: It is a key priority. In fact, for Northern Ireland, failure is not an option on it. We need it, and we need it now.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister. Will he give us some indications as to what potential savings there are for businesses? Would long-term security of supply develop as a result of the establishment of the North/South interconnector?

Mr Bell: Over a period, you could be looking at a saving of somewhere in the region of £20 million. It is critical. I have been joined by many of the other bodies. I have said this wherever I have gone, from SONI to all the different bodies that I speak to in terms of energy: it is time that this issue was addressed. It is critical to our long-term security of supply, and it can deliver savings and do so quickly. For Members, including from my area, who are coming to me with very justifiable concerns regarding the costs of electricity for manufacturing, I refer them to the North/South interconnector as the key means of achieving savings and strengthening Northern Ireland's long-term security of supply.

Brexit: Economic Implications

T4. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to confirm that his Department received a report from Oxford Economics on the economic implications for the North of a Brexit. (AQT 3644/11-16)

Mr Bell: We are to receive that report.

Mr McMullan: Will the Minister assure me that that report will be published on its completion?

Mr Bell: Yes.

Manufacturing: Armagh City and District

T5. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what he and his Department are doing to assist the manufacturing sector in Armagh city and district, with particular reference to SFM Engineering, which employs 40 people and could double that workforce with a little help from Invest NI and DETI. (AQT 3645/11-16)

Mr Bell: If the Member comes to me with the details and if he is talking about doubling a workforce, he will get a very willing reception from the Department.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Minister for his response. I have written to him. I will, after this question today, await his response.

Following on from that, will the Minister give his assessment of the recent closure of Camden glass factory outside Armagh, with the loss of 65 jobs? What has his Department done in trying to relocate some of those jobs and assist the people who left with the bare minimum of a redundancy package? Will the Minister respond to that, please? Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr Bell: The Member, in his original question, did not tell me which company he was referring to. I cannot look into a crystal ball. Where there is the opportunity to increase manufacturing jobs, he will have heard me say that all my

work with all the bodies, including Manufacturing Northern Ireland and my manufacturing and energy advisory group, which is to report to me, is targeted towards making manufacturing in Northern Ireland so competitive that it can compete with the rest of the world in terms of exports. Specifically, in regions, we have looked towards how we can increase the skills level and reduce the particular energy costs. We have brought the unions and the power companies together. We have backed them up with some of the best evidence from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, and we have allowed the manufacturing and energy advisory group to be chaired by, I think, the fifth-largest energy user in Northern Ireland.

I actually believe in Northern Ireland. I believe in our manufacturing. At the end of the day, Lord Kelvin, the father of modern science, was born here. John Dunlop invented the pneumatic tyre. Harry Ferguson patented the technology that led to the modern tractor. To give you another example, the portable defibrillator was invented by Professor Pantridge. We have to ensure that Northern Ireland manufacturing continues to compete against the best in the world.

Renewables Obligation Closure Order

T6. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assure the House that Northern Ireland bill payers will not be burdened by what could be a Northern Ireland socialised ROC or incentive scheme, given that, tomorrow, he will bring forward a renewables obligation closure order. (AQT 3646/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Member will know that we have consistently tried to ensure that the Northern Ireland bill payer is protected as much as possible. Individuals come to me with specific projects. They are very well meaning, and I find myself, in my heart, sympathising with them and the situations that they find themselves in. However, I ask anybody in Northern Ireland to realise that I have a responsibility to ensure that the business sector and the domestic household user get the best value possible. At every stage along this process, as the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) changed the facts, I changed my policy in order to deliver the cheapest and most cost-effective energy to businesses and domestic customers.

Mr Frew: Given the Minister's moves to try to protect consumers and bill payers in Northern Ireland, and the moves that have been made in Westminster, how can he influence the Programme for Government in the coming days and weeks to try to assist in bringing bills down in Northern Ireland, particularly those for industry and commerce?

Mr Bell: I appreciate the Member's question because it reflects the nature of some of the uncomfortable choices that I have had to make as Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister. I was receiving costs that could have put bills up by £50 for every available house. At all times, as DECC changed the policy, I acted to change too. Energy costs are a significant challenge for the manufacturing sector. Our job is to put policies and strategies in place to support manufacturing. However, I would also say that finding a solution to energy costs starts within manufacturing itself.

I worked very closely with Manufacturing Northern Ireland. As I said earlier, I established the advisory group that had membership from industry, business

representative organisations, trade unions and leading academics. I am looking forward to using their advice in future discussions on a Programme for Government and energy cost reduction measures. Listening to industry allows companies, who have the people who are best placed, to find effective energy strategies and solutions. When I get the report from the energy and manufacturing advisory group, I am very confident that we will be able to offer constructive solutions that should be part of material discussions for the new Programme for Government.

Mr Speaker: Question 7 has been withdrawn in accordance with the appropriate protocols. Mr Patsy McGlone is not in his place. Question 9 has also been withdrawn in line with the appropriate protocols.

Job Losses: DETI Action

T10. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what he has done since Caterpillar last announced job losses, given that, when companies in East Antrim such as Caterpillar make announcements about job losses, we see a great flurry of activity to ensure that as much as possible is done to assist them. (AQT 3650/11-16)

2.45 pm

Mr Bell: Whether the job losses have been there or elsewhere, and we have seen some of those big challenges, my Department has consistently sat down with Minister Farry. Most recently, we have done that immediately on hearing what is going to happen. In fact, sometimes we have pre-meetings on the basis of speculation on what might occur. My first priority is to try to ensure that those members have the skills necessary to apply for new manufacturing jobs that are coming on stream. As I said earlier, in the past financial year, we have had well over 3,000 manufacturing jobs coming on stream.

I try to ensure, first of all, that the members who have the skills are accredited. Many members will have gone through schemes in work but do not have the formal certification, so we work together to ensure, with the regional colleges, that they get the necessary certification. Secondly, in many cases, we try to bring to those bodies the different skills that are needed and try to match them against the skills that exist. The third thing that we try to do is attract more manufacturing jobs to Northern Ireland. You have seen the significant investment that Invest Northern Ireland has put into bringing manufacturing jobs to Northern Ireland. You will have seen that there are challenges, although I will not use the word "crisis" because the manufacturing industry has asked me not to. The fact is that we have more than 80,000 manufacturing jobs in Northern Ireland, which is the greatest time since 2008. We will ensure that manufacturing is at the heart of the refreshed economic strategy.

Justice

Maghaberry: Inspection Update

1. **Mr Ó Muilleoir** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the inspection of Maghaberry prison by the Criminal Justice Inspection in January 2016. (AQO 9852/11-16)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The report following the reinspection of Maghaberry prison in January recognises the complex and challenging environment for prisoners and staff. I am encouraged that it acknowledges that the prison has been stabilised and that progress has been made across a range of areas, including the improvements made in safety and leadership. I welcome that. However, that progress must be built upon and continue.

Significant work has been carried out to improve performance and deliver better outcomes for prisoners. A comprehensive action plan has been put in place to address the shortcomings identified and to ensure that Maghaberry delivers a safe, decent and secure environment for staff, as well as those in custody. That plan is being robustly managed, and the Maghaberry senior management team is continuing to focus on the key priorities and recommendations to address the concerns raised and ensure that improvement continues.

I do not underestimate the challenges that remain, but having independent verification that progress has been made should give staff, prisoners, their families and the wider community confidence that Maghaberry is moving in the right direction.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. It is appropriate to wish the Minister well on his last Question Time. Your legacy will depend on how you answer the next supplementary. Is it the case, based on your answer, Minister, that the ancien régime, which you can translate as "old guard", at Maghaberry, with its resistance to change, is on the back foot or is a thing of the past?

Mr Ford: I am not sure that I quite recognise Mr Ó Muilleoir's interpretation of things. I can confirm the strong recognition that came from CJINI, both in the report and in the subsequent words of Mr Brendan McGuigan at his press conference and when he appeared before the Justice Committee, of the confidence in the leadership team in Maghaberry. Whilst he identified that progress was fragile, he made it clear that he believed significant progress had been made and that he had confidence that it would continue.

Mr Attwood: I, too, wish the Minister well in the future. Can you, Minister, outline how the glaring deficits in mental health support for prisoners are going to be rectified? That was a matter highlighted by the CJI report. Touching upon the earlier question, are you not concerned that, after years of reform and oversight, there still seems to be a stream within the Prison Service that sees the role of prison to be, first, last and only, the punishment of the prisoner?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Attwood for his good wishes. I hope not every Member who stands up is going to say that to keep me busy.

Clearly, there is an issue: some members of the Prison Service have had difficulties adjusting to a different set of arrangements. That is why we had the voluntary exit scheme, which allowed people who had served in difficult times to leave with dignity; but not all who were eligible left. In my contact with the leadership teams in Maghaberry and at prison headquarters, and from visiting Maghaberry and engaging with individuals, I have seen a change in atmosphere, but it has not changed as far or as fast as we would have hoped. That will be ongoing work for my successor.

Mr Kennedy: The original report found:

“Many staff continued to adhere to a view that prisoners were to be feared”.

Does the Minister agree, following the recent attempted murder of a prison officer in east Belfast, that such fears by prison officers and staff are well founded?

Mr Ford: There is certainly a point in what Mr Kennedy says. However, there is a difference between the threat posed to prison officers, as to police officers, in their private life and the threat posed to them within prisons, whether it is perceived to be less direct than that on the streets outside. The situation is improving significantly, through, for example, greater supervision of communal areas to ensure suitable protection for prisoners as well as prison staff. However, I can only go on the basis of the report given to me by those who carried out the inspection. Certainly, the contrast between May, when the CJINI team and colleagues left with a palpable “sense of despair”, to quote their words, and January, when they left with “a sense of hope”, is an indication of good progress.

Prison Service: Recruitment

2. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of Justice how the Prison Service is recruiting officers in historically hard-to-reach communities. (AQO 9853/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is committed to ensuring that, as an organisation, it reflects the community it serves. In launching its most recent recruitment campaign, the Prison Service sought to encourage applications from all sections of the community. Information about the vacancies was broadcast on local radio, and the advertisement was widely published in newspapers and journals whose readership gives a representative spread. The Prison Service also asked all councils and a range of community representatives to advise those with whom they have contact of the employment opportunity.

A number of outreach measures have been undertaken to encourage applications from members of under-represented sections of the community and to promote a positive image of the Prison Service. Links have been developed with schools in Northern Ireland through careers officers, and information on career opportunities in NIPS has been presented under the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association experience of work programme. Presentations have also been delivered to a number of schools.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his answer. I also condemn the evil attack on the prison officer in east Belfast last week and wish him a speedy recovery. Our thoughts are with his family and colleagues at this time.

I welcome the measures that the Minister has outlined, but, difficult though it may be to recruit from the communities addressed in my question, and to which the Minister referred in his answers, what more can be done to get recruits from areas such as North Belfast, which I represent? These evil people must never be allowed to win — they cannot be seen to win. All that can be done to attract representatives from across the community must be done by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to ensure that it is indeed reflective of society.

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Humphrey for his condemnation of the attack on Friday week. I met the family that day and have since had the opportunity to meet the prison officer. I am pleased to say that he is making a reasonable recovery from his injuries. That attack must be condemned, and I welcome the condemnation that I know comes from all parts of the House.

One does need to be careful that we do not get away from the basic principle of recruitment on merit. The key issue is to ensure that people from every part of the community are encouraged to apply, and I believe that has been done. The groups that have applied through recent recruitment to the Prison Service — for example, to the prisoner escort and custody service and to other opportunities over the last year — have been more representative, but they are not yet fully representative. That work has to continue.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answer. The voluntary exit scheme and, indeed, the recruiting procedures came from an Anne Owers recommendation. Does the Minister agree that it is vital that recruitment continues to ensure that we tackle the customs and practices, which need to be replenished and refreshed?

Mr Ford: Yes, I certainly agree that recruitment has to be continued. Members will be aware — at least, they will if they have been following things in the Justice Committee — that a number of vacancies are being addressed by recruitment. Indeed, last Friday, there was a passing out parade from the college that is now Hydebank Wood of another class graduating for the escorting service. There is ongoing work on that, but I accept that there are issues that tie in with things like overtime and the flexibility that that provides, as opposed to the numbers of mainstream staff in post. Those are continuing issues as we deal with the difficult budget situation that NIPS and, indeed, the whole Justice Department have.

Mr McCrossan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. I am sure that he would agree that it is very important that the Prison Service reflects the entire community in its workforce. What is the percentage of Catholic and female recruits?

Mr Ford: I do not think that I can give exact figures at this stage. The last figures I saw were from June 2012, and, at that point, 80% of staff were seen as Protestant and 79% were male. There has been a significant turnaround, but I cannot give the figures for the most recent recruitments. By March 2016, the overall percentage of Protestants was 78%, which is still a very high proportion, although the numbers of recruits have changed that slightly. At that stage, the percentage of males was down to 72% from 79%. So there has been modest progress. The intakes have certainly been significantly more representative, but overall, given the limited numbers that have been recruited, it has not made a huge difference.

Mr Hussey: I thank the Minister for his responses so far. I, too, condemn those who terrorised the prison officer recently. Terrorists terrorise in an effort to discourage people from joining the Prison Service or the Police Service, for that matter. How many prison officer posts will be available to be applied for in the coming year?

Mr Ford: I do not have that information at this stage, on the basis that we do not know how many retirements and resignations there will be or, indeed, the precise details of how the budget will apply across the services. Active recruitment is proceeding. If I am in a position to give any more information, I will write to Mr Hussey with the full details.

Animal Welfare Legislation

3. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the benefits of the inclusion of animal welfare legislation in the Justice (No. 2) Bill [NIA 57/11-16]. (AQO 9854/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Justice (No. 2) Bill, which is before the House, will increase the maximum prison sentence for animal cruelty cases heard in the Crown Court from two years to five years. The maximum sentence in the Magistrates' Court for certain animal cruelty offences will also increase from six months to 12 months, and the maximum fine will increase from £5,000 to £20,000. Increasing the maximum penalties available will act as a significant deterrent, and it sends out a strong message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated in our society. Northern Ireland will have the toughest penalties for animal cruelty of any region of these islands.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Minister, how can you guarantee that those penalties will be used to the maximum when someone is found guilty of committing such a crime?

Mr Ford: Members will be aware that the Minister cannot do anything to guarantee how sentences will be used. The decision in any individual case will be for a judge, but such a significant increase in the maximum penalty is sending out a clear message from the Assembly, as the legislative body, to those who pronounce sentences of the expectation of a significant increase in those that are given.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer, which is very welcome. Does he agree with me that there is an enormous task to be undertaken in educating those people who still believe that it is OK to cause cruelty to animals, whether they are domestic or wild animals? Does he agree with me that we should get on with the task of making it clear, in the widest possible way, that cruelty to animals, wherever it is, is evil and wrong?

Mr Ford: I certainly agree with Mr Dallat that there is an enormous task in dealing with the small number of people who believe that such behaviour is acceptable. The overwhelming public response to the proposals to enhance sentences shows where the vast majority of our people are. I am not sure how much of a role the Department of Justice has to play in educating people except insofar as, through the work being done between the Department of Justice and the Department of Agriculture on enhancing sentences, we are sending out a clear message, which I believe will be well publicised by social media, the press and broadcast media.

3.00 pm

Mr Patterson: Given the case of Cody the dog near Moira and the utterly disgusting attack on Tiger the cat in Hillsborough last week, will the Minister agree that sentences must be handed out by the courts that reflect public revulsion at the people who commit such crimes?

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Ford: I do not think that Mr Patterson was in the Chamber earlier when we were debating the Justice (No. 2) Bill when the issue was touched on by a number of Members.

It is, of course, right that we as the legislature should send out a message by enhancing sentences, but I need to be very careful about suggesting that I would tell any judge the precise sentence that should be awarded in any particular case.

Equal Pay

4. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Justice what discussions about equal pay he has had with the Minister of Finance and Personnel, or with officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel. (AQO 9855/11-16)

Mr Ford: Although I have written to and corresponded with the Finance Minister, I have not spoken directly to him or his officials on any particular proposal. I have always been, and remain, fully supportive of a centrally driven and centrally funded solution. It is a matter for the Department of Finance and Personnel, not the Department of Justice, as it affects staff across a number of Departments and other bodies.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that I have raised the issue with him on a number of occasions, yet those affected are still waiting. I appreciate that the issue affects staff in other Departments. Can he outline, however, what actions he has taken on behalf of those staff in his Department who still contact all of us on the issue?

Mr Ford: As I said, I have corresponded with the Finance Minister, but, fundamentally, the issue is one for the Department of Finance and Personnel, as an issue of Civil Service pay in general. There are staff in the Department of Justice who are affected. Probably by now, there are staff affected in each of the other 11 Departments. Only the Department of Finance and Personnel can set the arrangements. I have responded to the draft Executive paper that the Finance Minister circulated on 19 February, but that paper has not yet been considered by the Executive.

Mr Allister: What does the Minister think it says to those staff that, for five years now probably, the issue has been talked about but not acted on and passed from one Department to another. Yes, the primary responsibility no doubt does lie with DFP, but can the Minister update us on whether the Executive, of which he is a member, have yet discussed and agreed a paper that the Finance Minister claims has been placed before them?

Mr Ford: I thought that I had just made it clear to Mrs Dobson that the Executive have not discussed that. Moreover, the issue has not been passed from one Department to another. The issue is for DFP, and DFP has prepared draft papers that have not yet been discussed by the Executive.

Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

5. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. (AQO 9856/11-16)

6. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the impact that the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 will have on the justice system. (AQO 9857/11-16)

Mr Ford: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will take questions 5 and 6 together.

The Act is not a replacement for the Misuse of Drugs Act; rather, on top of existing legislation, it adds another means of combating the sale and distribution of so-called legal highs. Those substances, which frequently contain completely new chemical compounds with unknown dangerous properties, can and do cause serious harm, and even death. It is often the case that those experimenting with recreational drugs are misled into thinking that such substances are safe.

By making any psychoactive substance automatically illegal — other than a small number of exemptions, such as alcohol, nicotine and caffeine — the new legislation will make it very difficult indeed for the so-called head shops to continue to ply their harmful trade. The legislation will considerably enhance the enforcement powers available to use against those intent on supplying those harmful substances right across the UK.

The Act focuses on possession with intent to supply and does not create an offence of simple possession, except in a custodial institution.

As for the impact of the Act on the justice system, the main effect will be on the ability of the police to move more quickly and effectively against head shops and other dealers of psychoactive substances. Following Royal Assent on 28 January, my Department and organisations across the criminal justice system have continued to prepare for the coming into force of the Act on 6 April.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answers. Following on from the experience of similar legislation in the Irish Republic, can he assure us that the new legislation will be effective and that the police and other agencies, including councils, will have the necessary resources to carry out enforcement? The main issue is that the police now have to scientifically prove that a substance is psychoactive.

Mr Ford: Yes, although, in the first instance, the issue is ensuring that anything that might be psychoactive can be dealt with. I cannot guarantee the resources that will be provided to local councils, but I can tell the House about a recent visit that I paid to Queen's University to see work being done between Queen's and Forensic Science. As part of a particular project, it was possible to identify something like 75% of psychoactive substances with a relatively simple laser-imaging test. The precise details of the physics and chemistry are a bit beyond me, but what was clear was that it was saving significantly on the resources, meaning that only one sample in four would need to be subjected to the full resources of Forensic Science. I think that that is an example of positive partnership. I am delighted that it was funded by the assets recovery community scheme, and I think it is the kind of good work that is helping to keep Northern Ireland at the forefront against new psychoactive substances (NPSs).

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that the Psychoactive Substances Act is a clear demonstration that we will not allow the lives of people in our community to be put at risk by these dangerous and,

at times, fatal psychoactive substances? Does he agree that those who seek to distribute them can expect to be brought to justice?

Mr Ford: I welcome the question and I think, as was highlighted by Mr Dunne, that this is an issue where UK legislation has learned from the Irish experience, which is not always the way in which legislation is made in these islands. It was as a result of good cooperation across a number of agencies, including involvement that the DOJ had in pressing the Home Office to learn the lessons of the Irish. Between ourselves, the Scots and the Home Office, I think that we now have good legislation. Clearly, there is a lot to do to ensure that it is made fully operational, but I believe that it is very beneficial that the Home Office listened to the experience that we highlighted and became aware of the alternative ways of addressing it. A combination of good policy work and good scientific advances will help the fight against these dreadful substances.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Can the Minister detail the number of groups and organisations that receive funding to tackle the problem of these substances?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Lynch for the question. The key issue is the funding for the scientific work being done by Queen's. I know that there are a number of cases where PCSPs are working. We had good examples — pioneering work, almost, for the UK as a whole — from Belfast City Council's environmental health department, so there will be a number of different bodies carrying out that kind of work. The key issue is to get a joined-up approach to ensure that people work together. Clearly, when one looks at some of the work being done by PCSPs in action plans on drug problems, one sees that the issue of NPSs features in quite a few of them.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that the need to move very efficiently and effectively to ban such harmful substances is very important indeed?

Mr Ford: Yes. I appreciate the point, but the serious issue is that, previously, individual substances had to be banned effectively by name or chemical formula. We are now in the position that the ban is absolute. Until a substance is proven not to have a psychoactive effect, it is illegal unless it falls within the small list of specified substances that I highlighted earlier, including nicotine, alcohol and caffeine, which is, perhaps, a lesson to those of us who had an extra cup of coffee at lunchtime.

Prison Service Reform

7. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to build upon the progress made in reforming the Prison Service since 2011. (AQO 9858/11-16)

Mr Ford: On 1 March, I hosted an event to mark the end of the formal prison reform programme. With 90% of the recommendations signed off, we have seen significant progress, and the prison system today, in Northern Ireland, is very different from the one that I inherited on devolution in April 2010.

For too long, the challenge of prison reform in Northern Ireland was kept by direct rule Ministers in the "too difficult drawer", with prisons focused on the task of containment rather than rehabilitation. Devolution gave me the

opportunity to address the issue head on, and, with the prison review team (PRT) report as the catalyst, we were able to make rehabilitation and transformational change the primary focus of our prison system. However, prison reform is not complete. We have merely come to the end of the first phase. The job over the next 10 years and beyond is to embed that change and deliver the end-to-end transformational change envisaged by the prison review team in 2011.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his response and congratulate him on implementing so many of the reforms. Can I ask, now that the end of phase 1 has been implemented, if the Minister can advise the Assembly what we can expect from phase 2, as we go forward?

Mr Speaker: You can ask a supplementary, Mr McCarthy.

Mr McCarthy: Thank you.

Mr Ford: I am not quite sure that I would describe it as "phase 2", as Mr McCarthy says. In the conclusion of the work of the prison review oversight group, there were five key strategic themes on which the Prison Service will focus to ensure that the reform is embedded. The first theme is leadership; recognising the importance of building a strong and effective leadership, including home-grown leadership, in particular. The second theme is purposeful activity. We have seen progress made around learning and skills, particularly in Hydebank, but much more remains to be done.

The third theme is equality and diversity to ensure a better outcome for prisoners and, as we talked about earlier, a workforce that better represents our society. The fourth theme is that a fit-for-purpose prison estate, with 21st-century accommodation, is central to all of our plans. The fifth theme is partnership with healthcare and recognising that strong relationships with healthcare colleagues who are working to a common goal are vital to ensuring that we make progress in the prisons.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that progression and regression are easily identified by any critical read of Anne Owers's prison reform review?

Mr Ford: I certainly agree with Mr Milne that not all involved in prisons are seeking to move at the same pace or in the same direction, but, as I said earlier, I think that we have seen significant improvements recently. The fact that we have signed off on 90% of the recommendations of the prison reform programme is a clear indication of the positive work that is being done. Of course, some of it will involve partnership elsewhere around learning and skills and healthcare, and a lot of it will involve the provision of capital funding from the Department of Finance and Personnel, as well as the work that needs to be done within the Prison Service and DOJ. So, there is a considerable amount to be done, but I am confident that we are moving in the right direction.

Mr A Maginness: I welcome the significant progress that has been made in prison reform. It is very, very important, because it was long neglected. Would the Minister consider inviting Anne Owers back to Northern Ireland to review what has been achieved to measure it against her original recommendations? Would that be welcomed?

Mr Ford: It is certainly an interested idea in the sense that the PRT was put together to produce recommendations, and the issue of how those recommendations were

handled was left to the oversight group, with specific involvement from CJINI and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA). I am not sure how bringing back the reform team or Anne Owers, individually, would be the appropriate way to move forward. She seems to be fairly busy with some duties she has in policing across the water. However, it might be an issue for my successor to think about in another year or two, perhaps.

Mr Speaker: Mr Paul Givan for a quick supplementary.

Mr Givan: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When the Minister talks about reform to ensure a workforce that better represents the community, what does he mean?

Mr Ford: I mean just the same as we mean in the context of the reforms that we have seen in recent years around the Police Service, for example, to ensure that the workforce in prisons is broadly representative of the community outside.

It is clear, as I indicated earlier, before, I think, Mr Givan was in the Chamber, that, although there had been improvement in the representative nature of those recruited recently, the overall balance of the workforce in prisons is not as good as we would wish it to be. That said, we have to acknowledge the challenges presented by the threat that is still imposed by terrorism outside that make it particularly difficult for some people to apply to join the Prison Service.

3.15 pm

Mr Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Prison Officers: Terrorist Threat

Mr Givan: Continuing the line of questioning about prisons, I should say that, whatever religion you are, you have properly represented the community when you have been a prison officer irrespective of whether you are Protestant or Catholic; that should not come into it.

T1. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the terrorist threat to prison officers. (AQT 3651/11-16)

Mr Ford: I must just address Mr Givan's first point: in no way was I suggesting that an individual officer could not be a fit officer whatever their background is, but the overall numbers are not as representative of the community as we would wish them to be.

The threat to prison officers, as to police officers, stands at severe, as it has since the point of devolution. We witnessed on Friday a week ago on the streets of Belfast just how significant that threat is.

Mr Givan: In light of the ongoing severe terrorist threat to prison officers, does the Minister regret entering into what was heralded as the "August agreement" with the republican prisoners of Roe House, given that it has failed and that terrorist activities targeted towards those prison officers have continued day after day and year after year? He entered into an appeasement policy with the prisoners back in August.

Mr Ford: Since I did not enter into an appeasement policy, I do not regret it. There was an honest and genuine attempt to reduce the tensions that existed in Roe House. It was made absolutely clear that progress in making different arrangements for prisoners would be dependent

on threats ending, whether they were in the face of officers on the landings or on social media. That has not been the case. There has been no movement in the direction, as has been alleged by some people, of allowing prisoners to run the house. The Prison Service runs Roe House as it runs every other part of Maghaberry prison.

Senior Coroner: Recruitment and Appointment

T2. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the recruitment and appointment of a senior coroner and to state whether he can give a degree of certainty about when he expects that person to be in place. (AQT 3652/11-16)

Mr Ford: Members will be aware that there are a number of issues relating to the Coroners Service that are under way, in particular the fact that a High Court judge has been assigned to hear one of the early inquests. There is a County Court judge as well. It is not just an issue of a senior coroner on the traditional pattern; it is a matter of the significant strengthening of the Coroners Service by the movement in of other, more senior judges to take on the more difficult cases, which, I believe, should give us all confidence.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. Will the Minister tell us whether he believes that the coroners office has sufficient resources to deal with all outstanding legacy cases at the moment?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Sheehan for that point. I have made it fairly clear on a number of occasions publicly and on every occasion, I think, when I have met the Secretary of State since November last year that the Coroners Service requires a significant increase in resources to carry out its work in a way that would provide a speedy resolution to the number of legacy inquests which are resting. Members will be well aware of the work being done by the Lord Chief Justice to ensure that that work is done as efficiently as possible. Since he assumed the presidency of the court, there has been a lot of engagement around that, but it is absolutely clear that the money for that has to be the money that was offered by the Prime Minister over a year ago, which we have not yet seen forthcoming. I will continue to make that case to the Executive, the Northern Ireland Office and, I hope, ultimately through them to the Treasury.

Mr Speaker: Question 3 has been withdrawn within the appropriate protocols.

Unanswered Questions to the Minister of Justice

T4. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Justice, given that this is his last Question Time, to outline an occasion when he has not passed the buck to another Department, stating that the answer does not fall within the remit of his Department, and, on this occasion, tell us how many times he received questions that he could have answered but did not answer. (AQT 3654/11-16)

Mr Ford: The answer to the latter is "Zero". If people ask me questions about matters that are operational responsibilities for the police or the PPS or are the responsibilities of other Departments, I will not answer them.

Mr I McCrea: I am not surprised by the Minister's answer, but, surely, given that he has announced that he will not

take on the job of Justice Minister after the election — that is dependent on the electorate, of course, but nonetheless — surely he will have to accept that there have been questions that may not have come under his direct responsibility that he could have answered in respect of policing matters or other aspects of justice instead of passing the buck. Surely he has to accept that there have been occasions when he has done that. Will he, at least, admit to that and maybe answer some that he has passed the buck on in the past?

Mr Speaker: It is entirely a matter for the Minister if he wants to address that or not.

Mr Ford: Mr McCrea started off by saying that the decision on whether or not I was Justice Minister was one for the electorate. Actually, it is not; it is one for me. Whether I am an MLA is an issue for the good people of South Antrim; whether I am Justice Minister I have made fairly clear. The rest of his question merited the same kind of answer as I had just given to the first bit.

Psychoactive Substances Act 2016: PSNI Use

T5. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Justice whether the PSNI has, as of yet, utilised the new Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 to shut down retail operations such as that in East Antrim that was selling bath salts and plant food. (AQT 3655/11-16)

Mr Ford: I am afraid that I can answer that one, even though it is actually an operational issue for the police, on the simple basis that the legislation comes into force on 6 April, so I can assure all Members that the PSNI has not made use of it, though I can report, as I have done previously, that the PSNI and environmental health officers have made good use of consumer safety legislation previously.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Minister for that information. I am aware that, in Larne, young people who congregated and bought such items were involved in shoplifting etc to fund the exercise and often came into Larne from other locations using public transport. My question to the Minister is a bit wider. In Hydebank, young people who may have become addicted to such drugs ultimately entered the criminal justice system. Can the Minister tell me what testing goes on there to ensure that such drugs are not still entering Hydebank and adversely affecting the behaviour, mental health and well-being of many of our young people there?

Mr Ford: That is not just a question relating to new psychoactive substances; that is an issue relating to the way in which prisons deal with drug threats in all circumstances. There is a rigorous programme of drug testing of individuals in prisons, particularly if anybody has been out on home leave, and of searching, as appropriate, visitors and prisoners coming in and leaving. All of that is done to reduce the drug problem, but there is no doubt that there is a widespread drug problem in this society, and prisons are not immune from that. All prisons can do is seek by the use of technology, indicator dogs and searching to ensure that they prevent substances coming in and by ensuring that searching is carried out in a way that deals with them if substances are on the premises.

Mr Speaker: Mr McCausland is not in his place, although I should say that he contacted us outside the approved time frame to attempt to get the question withdrawn.

Colin Worton

T7. **Mr Kennedy** asked the Minister of Justice, given that he is reaching the end of his tenure as Justice Minister, whether he will reconsider the case of the Newry and Armagh constituent Mr Colin Worton and his long-standing campaign to finally clear his name. (AQT 3657/11-16)

Mr Ford: I fully appreciate the number of representations that have been made, not least by Mr Kennedy, about Mr Worton and the manner in which he stood trial and was not convicted of a serious offence some years ago. I understand the comparison that is made with others who were wrongfully convicted and received compensation for serving subsequent sentences. It is not an issue that I believe I can address. It has been through all the appeal mechanisms and has been referred through the appropriate ways in which legal cases can be dealt with, and I regret that I do not think that there is anything I can do to assist Mr Worton.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Minister for his response. Can he outline any possible options open to Mr Worton in pursuit of his very justified campaign for justice?

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mr Kennedy's use of the term "very justified campaign" and we can all have sympathy for Mr Worton, but, in fact, he is in no different a position to many other people who were charged and then found not guilty. There is no provision under the law of any part of the United Kingdom for compensation payments in those circumstances, and, as far as I can see, he has exhausted all potential legal remedies to deal with it. Whilst one can, at a human level, have great sympathy for Mr Worton — his case has been well made — I do not believe that any further route can be adopted.

Justice Achievements

T8. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Justice to highlight some of his achievements during his time in office, given that he referred to the Justice Department that he inherited at the point of direct rule and, a number of years on, not only has he not passed the buck on very difficult decisions but he has driven the Department of Justice forward, leaving us with a faster and fairer justice system for everyone. (AQT 3658/11-16)

Mr Ford: I am sure, Mr Speaker, that it would take me far longer than the two minutes that you would allow to list all the achievements. [Laughter.] However, I can think of the very significant reforms to the prison system that have been under way for some time; the significant achievements that were announced around youth justice following on from the youth justice review in my earlier statement today; and, dare I say it, dealing in a reasonably equitable way with the difficult issue of funding legal aid. All those issues were not exactly easy, but I believe that we have seen significant improvements in those areas. I think that a number of the measures in the previous Justice Act and in the Bill that, I trust, will become an Act in a few minutes, plus Royal Assent time, will also continue to make matters much better for this community.

Mr Dickson: Minister, will you agree that, in addition to the issues that you have highlighted as successes since you took office from the point of direct rule, there have been some very dark days in your role when you have had to deal with the families of police officers and prison officers

who have lost lives, lost limbs and been injured? There are many others who perhaps are not known to us but are known to you. Minister, would you like to comment to the House on those aspects of the difficulties of being Justice Minister in Northern Ireland today, 18 years on from the Good Friday Agreement?

Mr Ford: We should certainly recognise the very significant progress that has been made since that Good Friday. We should also recognise what I believe has been progress made in the Department that was left as "too difficult" in 1998 and only saw devolution in 2010. In my time as Minister, I attended the funeral of David Black, a murdered prison officer; the funeral of Ronan Kerr, a murdered police officer; the funerals of others who have died in the course of duty; and the funerals of two members of an Garda Síochána, who were murdered by terrorists operating on a cross-border basis. We should fully acknowledge that a significant problem remains with a small number of those who have not accepted that this society has moved on, and we should ensure that we provide support to those who are leading the fight to ensure that we become a normal society, particularly those who wear police and prison officer uniforms.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Alban Maginness. We may not have time for a supplementary, I am sorry.

3.30 pm

Prison Service Wages

T9. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is prepared to review the wages paid to prison staff so as to attract and retain people in the Prison Service, in light of the fact that, at the Justice Committee, Monica McWilliams and Patricia Gordon both said that one of the problems with retaining new prison staff was the fact that wages were too low. (AQT 3659/11-16)

Mr Ford: There is something particularly pleasant about my last question at Justice Minister's Question Time coming from someone who has been a member of the Committee since the beginning and played a significant part on it. It is good not to be discussing legal aid with him.

I take his point about pay rates for new staff in the Prison Service. With retention and recruitment, that has been looked at and will continue to be looked at. I have no doubt that my successor will have decisions to take on that in the next year or so.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Minister. That concludes your final Question Time.

Executive Committee Business

Justice (No. 2) Bill: Final Stage

Debate resumed on motion:

That the Justice (No. 2) Bill [NIA 57/11-16] do now pass. — [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): As ever when you get to the Final Stage of a Justice Bill, you have disposed of the major rows, the Committee has done its work, Committee Stage has been extensive and detailed, and Consideration Stage has dealt with difficult issues and tidying-up issues. We are happy that Further Consideration Stage was a matter of only tidying up the paperwork.

When we came to today's debate, it was hardly a debate. I am not sure that it was a love-in, as somebody described it, but it was certainly a recognition of good work being done. Notably, one representative of each of the five parties on the Committee spoke almost uniformly in exactly the same place.

It was no surprise that Alastair Ross managed to get in his mention of a problem-solving approach at an early stage. I trust that he will keep my successor fully on his or her toes to ensure that we move on that and expand on the good work already done, particularly among young people. Raymond McCartney highlighted the issue of the Prison Ombudsman, in which he has taken an interest for a number of years.

Alban Maginness, backed by Danny Kennedy, suggested that others in this place should take note of the work being done by the Justice Committee and the way it worked together and dealt with difficult issues. That is absolutely right and merited. Stewart Dickson made a point on collaboration on firearms, which was not somewhere where there was easy agreement at an early stage. We should recognise those significant issues.

The only minor point of disagreement, I think, was the suggestion that the Prison Ombudsman was done fairly slowly — it was mentioned in the Hillsborough Castle Agreement of February 2010 — but, when you have a 38-year deficit of legislation to put through, not everything gets done in the first year or two. I am extremely pleased, although I am not sure that the position the Prisoner Ombudsman would have been in over the last few years would have been any different had this legislation gone through. Both Prisoner Ombudsmen whom I worked with as Minister were given their full place and recognition.

I think that everybody said that the Bill came to this stage only because of diligence, hard work and the cohesive efforts of a significant number of people. Some Members, Mr Speaker, praised your Deputy Speaker colleague. I add my thanks to you and all the Deputy Speakers for the work done alongside your staff in ensuring that matters went through cohesively.

If there was anything of a mutual love-in, it was as members of the Committee praised each other. I extend my good wishes to the two members who I know will definitely be leaving: Alban Maginness and Bronwyn McGahan. They may not be the only members who are leaving, but they are the only two who know that they are leaving at this point.

Given the length of time that he has spent on the Committee, I thank Alban Maginness for his kind words. He referred to not approving of the methodology for the election of the Justice Minister. That point of principle — I accept that it is a point of principle for him — did nothing to disrupt his good working relationship with the Minister or the Department, even if, at times, he was a bit like a barrister talking about legal aid. However, we will not make mention of anything negative.

In particular, his reference to his experience on other Committees and how well the Justice Committee has worked merits consideration by people in the Chamber who are not on the Justice Committee.

I repeat my thanks to the Chair and the Deputy Chair. I know that I am not supposed to say words like "Alastair" and "Raymond" and that I am supposed to call them by their titles, but they have been friends in a constructive working relationship. Christine, who comes in with them as Clerk of the Committee, has got on with my officials and me equally well and has made matters a whole lot better than might have been the case. I think that we have seen a significant improvement in the work of the Bill, as with every preceding Bill, by good, constructive, positive engagement and by the willingness of members of the Committee to engage with officials in the Department and vice versa. On this occasion, the amendments that came in did so when it was possible to ensure that they were put right at Consideration Stage, and any minor tweaks were fixed at Further Consideration Stage. That is absolutely the right way to work and has made things extremely positive for all of us.

I have to mention the one issue that Mr Dickson mentioned: my disappointment that we failed to address the tragic issue of fatal foetal abnormality. Various references have been made about this not being the right Bill and so on and so forth. I will not dwell on that, except to say that I fundamentally disagree with a number of the points that were made. I do think that the House will have to return to confront some of these difficult moral issues and work out how we meet those needs. In my remaining week or two, I look forward to working with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the promised working group looking at abortion law. That aside, I think that we have seen positive engagement and compromise producing significantly good legislation, not just in this Bill but in a number of other Bills.

Quite a number of good wishes were passed in my direction as well as those of the mutual love-in amongst the Committee members. I thank those Members for saying that. It reminded me of the point when I was elected Minister and stepped down from Antrim Council. For the first time ever, six members of the council said nice things about me on the day that I left. Clearly, I should resign more frequently and then more people would say nice things about me.

Mr Allister: Hear, hear.

Mr Ford: The problem is that I am not sure that Mr Allister would say anything nice about me even if I did resign.

I do, however, feel that it is appropriate that I should betray one personal confidence, Mr Speaker, and I trust that I will not embarrass the Member too much. You may recall that Alastair Ross was indicated to be the incoming Chair of the Justice Committee some weeks before he

actually took up the post. The day that he took up the post, he sent me a text message that said something along the lines of, "That's me in the Chair now; I shan't call for your resignation for at least a week". I have managed a little longer than a week. Some of his colleagues may think that it is a fault on his part that he did not call for my resignation. I have also not called for his resignation, but I do think that it is an indication of some constructive and some very positive good work.

I should just say on personal basis, if you will indulge me a little, that, given the number of good wishes that referred to whether I might be going somewhere, I should like to make it clear that the Taoiseach has not nominated me to the Seanad, whoever the Taoiseach may be. The last offer that I got of a seat in the House of Lords came from the then leader of the Ulster Unionist Party in 2005. I declined it and have not had one since. As far as I am concerned, subject to the wishes of the good people of South Antrim, I have every intent of going nowhere at all but coming back here after the election to take up a different role in the Assembly. I trust that those Members, particularly the members of the Justice Committee, who have shown such positive engagement with the incredibly difficult issues that the Department of Justice and the Committee have to deal with, will show the same positive support for my successor as they have shown me. With that, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Justice (No. 2) Bill [NIA 57/11-16] do now pass.

Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): I beg to move

That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

I am seeking the Assembly's approval for the Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016. These regulations are being brought in under article 137 of the Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 and will make provision for mitigating changes to welfare benefits introduced under articles 57 and 101 of the order. The draft statutory rule was approved by the Social Development Committee on 10 March. The regulations have been made following the publication of the welfare reform working group proposals on how the Executive should help the most vulnerable as a consequence of the introduction of a number of changes to the welfare system. I would like to thank Professor Evason and her colleagues on the working group for the work completed within a limited time frame in bringing forward recommendations to the Executive, which were subsequently endorsed on 21 January.

These regulations will enable the Department to implement mitigation payments to claimants impacted by the benefit cap and employment and support allowance (ESA) time-limiting measures. The benefit cap will restrict the total amount of benefit paid to a household to £26,000, and the cap will be applied through a claimant's housing benefit. The main out-of-work and child-related benefits that are included when calculating the benefit cap are jobseeker's allowance, income support and employment and support allowance, except where the support component has been awarded. A household is exempt from the benefit cap if they are entitled to working tax credits or a range of disability-related benefits.

Mitigation payments will be made to families who are receiving more than £26,000 a year, providing that they have been continuously in receipt of any combination of the welfare benefits that contribute towards the calculation of the cap from 31 May 2016 until the point at which they are impacted by the cap. That will include families who may initially have been exempt but who later lose that exemption and are impacted by the cap, and families who are initially below the cap level but for whom a change in their circumstances later causes their benefit income to exceed the cap.

Claimants will receive a payment equal to the amount by which their benefit is capped through reduction to their housing benefit, so there will effectively be no loss of benefit. These payments are transitional in nature and are intended to assist claimants with the transition from the current benefit system to the new welfare system. Households will continue to receive welfare supplementary benefits at the same level unless the amount by which their housing benefit is capped is reduced. In cases where there is an increase in the amount by which the housing benefit is capped, claimants will be able to apply for a discretionary housing payment for the restriction in the amount of housing benefit not covered by a mitigation payment. Discretionary housing payments are extra payments to help people to pay their rent.

I now turn to the time-limiting of employment and support allowance. Members will be aware that, if a claimant is receiving contribution-based employment and support allowance and are in the work-related activity group, the amount of time they can receive the benefit will be restricted to 12 months. If a claimant is in the support group, the time-limiting restriction will not apply, and they will continue to receive benefit as long as they remain in this group. Claimants who are no longer entitled to contribution-based employment and support allowance because of the new provision may be eligible for income-related employment and support allowance. In many cases, that will be paid at the same rate, which means that claimants will not experience a reduction in their benefit entitlement as a result of the change.

The amount of the welfare supplementary payment to mitigate employment and support allowance time-limiting will be either: the difference between the amount of the contribution-based employment and support allowance and the new award of income-related employment and support allowance; or a payment equal to the award of contributory employment and support allowance where there is no entitlement or no claim made to income-related employment and support allowance. Entitlement to a payment will be reviewed if a claimant subsequently has a new or increased award of income-related employment and support allowance. Further measures recommended by the working group to mitigate welfare reform are currently being prepared with a view to being those presented to the incoming Executive following the Assembly elections.

3.45 pm

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for bringing these regulations to the House.

Members are very aware that the forthcoming reform of our welfare system will be the biggest change to our benefit and tax credit system in over 70 years. From its initial consideration of the Welfare Reform Bill, which concluded in February 2013, the Committee for Social Development, like all Members of the House and numerous stakeholders, was particularly concerned about how such radical reform would impact on the most vulnerable people in our society. It has been a long process to agreeing a way forward on welfare, and, admittedly, there has been much disagreement along the way.

Discussions moved from the policy arena to the political arena, eventually emerging in the Stormont House Agreement and subsequently the Fresh Start Agreement. Following the Fresh Start Agreement, the Committee received a briefing, on 4 February 2016, on the recommendations of the working group on welfare reform mitigations, led by Professor Eileen Evason and her team. It was agreed that the recommendations of the working group would be fully implemented. In order to do this, secondary legislation is, of course, required.

The statutory rules being considered today are the first of a number of packages of such rules, as the Minister mentioned, that will underpin the agreed mitigation measures. The intent of these particular rules is to alleviate the reduction in benefits incurred as a result of the introduction of the benefit cap and time-limiting of

contribution-based employment and support allowance, which is due to be introduced here from 31 May 2016. Latest estimates indicate that it will affect around 400 households. That is a very important, necessary and welcome mitigation measure. Similarly, mitigation payments will be available to claimants of contribution-based employment and support allowance on the day on which the new time-limiting provision comes into operation. This, we understand, is expected to be in October/November 2016.

On 3 March 2016, the Committee received a briefing from the Social Security Agency on the proposed regulations, and it was agreed that the Committee was content for the rule to be made. It subsequently considered the statutory rule at its meeting on 10 March 2016, and there were no objections raised by members of the Committee. Indeed, we had a presentation at the same meeting from the Social Security Agency, which outlined a comprehensive range of measures that it is undertaking, in conjunction with the independent advice sector, to make sure that everyone who may be affected by the changes — as I said, the biggest changes in 70-odd years — is aware.

The Social Security Agency is undertaking a comprehensive range of actions, from advertising on TV and in the local media to briefing advice workers right across the Six Counties. It is working with all the disability advocate organisations to ensure that any transitioning from disability living allowance (DLA) to personal independence payment (PIP) is done in a way that does not further harm, hinder, hurt or traumatise people who have been affected in various ways through particular illnesses or disability. So, a very comprehensive range of measures is absolutely being undertaken by the Social Security Agency to advise the public as to how the changes may impact on them. In the context of these welfare payment measures this afternoon, they are also to make sure that people are fully aware of the mitigation measures — the payments that they will be entitled to — as a result of the Fresh Start Agreement.

Chair, with your indulgence, I will now speak as a member of Sinn Féin and an MLA, having made my earlier remarks as Chairperson of the Social Development Committee. Again, I welcome the measures tabled this afternoon. These measures obviously represent the product of an agreement that was fought for long and hard. Not everybody in the House signed up to it, but I would simply say that a lot of what I have heard so far, over the last year or two, and certainly within the last number of months, is favourable, despite the fact that, just a few months ago, this Assembly was on the point of collapse on one particular key issue. That was failure to reach agreement on the welfare cuts that were being imposed by the British Government, but we reached an agreement. We have the institutions. Critically, in the context of the discussion this afternoon, that agreement reached a mitigation package — “an envelope”, as people describe it — of £585 million over four years. That will be formally reviewed within three years, to check whether we are doing the right thing or need to do more. That will be evidence for another day’s discussion.

Crucially — I think that it was very important here — a panel of experts, led by Professor Eileen Evason, was established and asked to examine the measures that might be required to ease the burden for people who have a number of children, low-income families, the disabled, the

sick and so on and so forth. The expert panel was asked to look at how best they could use the money that we secured for a mitigation package. For me, the most important aspect of this is that the panel are experts in welfare and benefits: they are not party political hacks or people with a view. Whether that view is legitimate is not the point. The point is that we had a panel of experts, which we agreed would, hopefully, depoliticise the argument so that none of the measures being recommended or introduced would be subject to party political haggling.

To the credit of the then First Minister and deputy First Minister they agreed, in advance, to endorse and implement the recommendations produced by the panel led by Eileen Evason. I do not think that anyone could level any criticism against that panel of experts. The panel did a lot of hard work and I want to place on record my commendation to them for taking on the onerous task and coming up with very fair recommendations designed to blunt the worst aspects of the Tory cuts coming from London.

We all accept that these cuts have been imposed by London. Some may choose to ignore that, but the reality is that the British Government are responsible for welfare. We had it transferred here within very narrow confines, and we understand the principle of parity, which, essentially, boils down to the British Government saying that if we want to do anything different in terms of welfare we will have to get their agreement and pay for it ourselves. That is precisely what has been done in this case through the Fresh Start Agreement.

I think it is important that we remind the House that we have secured an additional £500 million of funding which we will put towards front-line public services. We also secured a budget of £585 million from within our own grant, which was set aside for very important mitigation measures. That, of course, will add to the range of flexibilities that we previously secured. Those were flexibilities that we had been asked for, and had been lobbied for, and which many of the parties in the Chamber here agreed to fight for. They included split payments, fortnightly payments, and payments for rent being paid directly to landlords. All of those very important measures will alleviate the burdens of people facing the cuts and restrictions that the British Government initially wanted to impose on people here. Therefore, it was very important to have secured those mitigations and flexibilities some time ago.

I do not think that any party in the House could deny how difficult a job it was to secure that range of flexibilities in the first instance. I have heard people in the Chamber talking in terms of how they had great friends in Lord Freud and in all the rest, and that he was a great listener. I met Lord Freud in his office in London on more than one occasion, and I can assure anybody that there was no quick fix or easy rollover from him or anybody else, no matter how good a listener they indicated they were or wanted to be. So, none of those flexibilities, which were secured through negotiation, were delivered easily or conceded easily. They were hard fought for and hard won, and I am glad that we have them.

We also secured very important limitations on the sanction regime that the British Government wanted to impose as well. We have taken off the worst of the sanctions that are being imposed in England, Scotland and Wales. We have also made sure that things will be less onerous for single parents who, for example, apply for jobs, due to the fact

that our circumstances here are fundamentally different than they are in Britain.

It is on that basis that my party wants to support these measures this afternoon. It is an absolute nonsense to tell people out there that welfare powers have been given over to the British Government. Everybody here knows that the British Government have the ultimate power over welfare issues here. They did threaten to introduce, and were on the point of introducing, a welfare reform Bill just a few months ago. People can choose to ignore that if they wish, but it is a hard reality.

I am pleased to say that I have spoken to the mitigations panel, to trade union representatives and to a lot of people in the community and voluntary sector and no one wants the cuts imposed. Everybody accepts that they are being imposed by London, and most people will welcome the fact that parties here came together in negotiations and fought a long, hard battle to make sure that we blunted the worst excesses of the cuts coming down the track from London.

Further cuts will be brought in by the British Government, as we heard even over the last weekend, and they are still considering new ways of punishing the poor. We know, regrettably in our view, that the current British Government were elected with a mandate, and they are an unfettered Tory Administration. I am not even arguing that the Lib Dems, who were with them previously, did any blunting.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Member for giving way. He was in Coleraine last week with the Social Development Committee when it talked about the implementation in May and June of this year. Does he agree with me — maybe the Minister will respond on this as well — about the importance of independent advice for those claimants? The advice agencies do great work across Northern Ireland; I am thinking of the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre in my area. Those organisations need support from the Assembly.

Mr Maskey: I totally agree with the Member. It is worth reminding ourselves that the measures recommended by Professor Eileen Evason's panel represent around £8 million, which is no small amount of money in the scheme of things. Five million pounds of that will be directly allocated through district council advice centres, and the independent sector is in there. The remainder will be distributed at a regional level to the bigger organisations. That has to be tailored to meet the need — in other words, to ensure that all that money goes to the front line of advising people who may well be affected by the changes and some of the cuts in the time ahead.

I welcome the regulations. None of us wants to see any of the cuts being imposed on people. A lot of us can be quite satisfied — I would not say "pleased" — that we have done our best to ensure that we have lessened the burden as best we can in the face of an unfettered Tory Government being elected in Britain with, unfortunately, a mandate to cut benefits and public services. That is their mandate, and it is worth reminding ourselves of that. We will all argue that no one in this society in the North — the Six Counties — approved that mandate. I am glad to say that, widespread throughout civic society, people here lobbied the political parties hard to do our best to blunt the worst excesses of the cuts coming from the Tory Government. I am satisfied that we have managed to do that. Rather than making statements that, in my view, are empty rhetoric, I

will make it clear that the people who were involved in this recent negotiation have secured important flexibilities in respect of universal credit and so on. They have secured very important financial protections for those who will suffer the bigger loss from some of the cuts being imposed to the tune of half a billion pounds over the next four years. We can be reasonably satisfied that we have secured that. There is no other similar system or mitigation measure in place in England, Scotland or Wales. To that extent, we can be grateful that we have managed to secure that here. We represent people here; we do not represent people anywhere else. I am pleased that we managed to secure the mitigations, the money for the independent advice centres, as Mr Douglas reminded us, and the flexibilities that have been built into the system to make things much easier. I look forward to the public awareness programme being rolled out by the Social Security Agency in conjunction with the independent advice sector and others in the very short time ahead.

Clearly, as time goes on, we will address, as and when they arise, the further cuts that may well be imposed. Neither I nor anyone else in the Chamber can make any further commitments at this point; we will simply have to see how further cuts are imposed, what their impact may be, who will be worse off and so on. I have no doubt that, having demonstrated our ability to do our level best to mitigate thus far the worst cuts coming from London, we will continue to endeavour to do that in the time ahead. Even if there are no further cuts to be imposed over the next three or four years, we will, within three years, formally review the mitigation package to see how effective it has been and what else we may need to do.

The people who were involved in the Fresh Start Agreement have delivered a package that, I know — it is not a matter of belief — is, quite clearly, second to none in these islands. That is important to state. We would have loved to be able to do more. I have heard a lot of other commentary, but empty rhetoric makes for empty purses. That agreement puts money into the pockets of the most vulnerable. I am pleased that we can stand over that today.

4.00 pm

Mrs D Kelly: The final note from Mr Maskey was about empty rhetoric making for empty purses. One of his latter comments was that they could make no further commitment on any future welfare cuts. That is a far cry from the rhetoric of Mr Adams, his party leader, when he said that no current or future claimant would be adversely affected by welfare cuts. If they want to look for empty rhetoric, they do not have far to look.

In relation to the regulations, we in the SDLP are pleased that many of the recommendations contained in the Evason report reflected the amendments that were tabled by our party and others to mitigate the worst excesses of the welfare proposals. We are pleased that they have been largely adopted. As you know, Mr Speaker, they were petitioned against by the DUP and Sinn Féin, so one wonders what the last year or so has been about, apart from further delay and uncertainty.

Last week, the Minister's Department gave a very good presentation to the Social Development Committee about how it would inform people. It took on board some of the concerns of members in terms of the communication, the telephone number and how it will communicate, in

particular, with people with visual impairments. I look forward to those considered comments being reflected in the final communication strategy. People are already coming to our constituency offices with concerns about discretionary payments and housing benefit. People will pick up on the debate today on the regulations and on the announcement by George Osborne on his future proposals in relation to DLA and PIPs. A lot of people are concerned. I hope that the Minister has plans in place for front-line staff to be trained. When we recently met senior staff at the Housing Executive, there was a great deal of uncertainty and grey areas on just how they were all going to be rolled out. As far as possible, we want to allay people's anxieties and concerns.

One of the big concerns in the news today is the fact that there is to be more strenuous testing in the move to PIPs from DLA. Sinn Féin can make no commitment on any future proposals or reforms that the Tories will introduce because they have been gifted that power by the DUP and Sinn Féin. The legislation does not have to come before this House for detailed scrutiny. Before the Minister leaves office, will he write to the Department for Work and Pensions and Mr Osborne to look for some exemptions from whatever they are going to do? Thousands of people who have to cope with a devastating prognosis and diagnosis around chronic and enduring conditions will never get better. Let us face it: people with MS or Parkinson's disease, those who have been left with debilitating conditions after a stroke, people who have learning disabilities and people who have chronic mental ill health, including psychotic-type illnesses, will never have the full lives that we would hope that they would have. They have to cope with a devastating prognosis for the rest of their life. Those of us who have represented people at appeals know about the stress that affects individuals who have to appear before such appeal panels. They are made to feel as if they have a begging bowl out. They have to prove before that panel the level of the disability that they have and the pain that they endure.

Will the Minister commit to writing to point out that, at the very least and as a starting point, there should be exemptions for chronic and enduring conditions that are life-limiting and for which there are no miracle cures? I seek that commitment from the Minister.

I thank the Minister and others for the opportunity to speak today, but, again, there is a lot of uncertainty. We are coming to the end of the mandate, and too much time has passed to reassure people that they will be able to continue with the income receipts that they currently enjoy and about how time-limited it will be. These are some of the first questions that people will ask. We all know that the Tories talk about having to make work pay. That is all very well, but, over here in the North, we have not had the same success with our economy as has been enjoyed elsewhere in these islands. We do not have those well-paid jobs, and many people are still trapped in the benefits system. I make a special plea to the Minister in relation to further cuts are coming down the track.

Mr Beggs: As others said, this is part of the biggest change to the welfare system affecting everyone in the United Kingdom in 70 years. Major changes will be undertaken in Northern Ireland within a matter of months. I, too, pay tribute to Professor Eileen Evason and her working group for their welfare reform mitigation

suggestions. One of the outcomes of their work are the new regulations to try to protect against the worst aspect of the changes and to allow people additional time to adapt to the new financial situations that will befall them. However, we all have to recognise that there is a limited amount of funds. The mechanism that has been chosen that will best help most people will give assistance for up to one year. I turn to the ESA contribution-based time limit that is in these regulations. Additional support will be given to assist people who may be affected by those changes, and I generally welcome that.

On the benefit cap changes and the mitigation in the regulations, I notice that, at part 2, regulation 4(6) states that the mitigations will end on 31 March 2020. It is important that there is recognition that significant change is afoot and that choices are made when we pay funds into this area. Mitigation is being given to protect, in particular, families with children. Nevertheless, this support is time-limited. We have to recognise that some have been receiving very large amounts of benefits. Information given to the Committee showed that one household was earning over £47,000 a year. This legislation will give a degree of protection, but everyone needs to recognise that there are no certainties.

On housing benefit assistance, I see that there are proposals that the additional benefit must be paid through a landlord who is registered under the landlord registration scheme or, alternatively, the Housing Executive or a housing association. That is correct. It is important that people who are receiving support should be in bodies or working with landlords who are properly registered and meet the required standards, that public money is limited to those people and, ultimately, that, when landlords do not behave as required, they risk losing their registration and, as such, their tenant.

I also see, under the miscellaneous section of the regulations, that there are other changes to the requirement for individuals to be present in Northern Ireland. Under the heading, "Temporary absence from Northern Ireland", the time limit will be the first four weeks of absence unless there are medical issues or treatment happening. If there are, the period will be extended to 13 weeks. The four-week limit is a sensible proposal.

There is concern that some have been using and abusing benefits in Northern Ireland. The ability to receive funds for four weeks when not present seems reasonably generous. I would not wish for someone to come to Northern Ireland, receive benefits, be here for a very limited period and continue to receive benefits. So, I can see why that change has come in in other parts of the United Kingdom and give general support to the four-week period being introduced here, with the adjustment for those who have to travel outside Northern Ireland because they are receiving medical treatment.

I give general support to the proposals.

Mr Attwood: I concur with all the comments made by other Members about the work undertaken by Professor Eileen Evason and her team. I spoke to her and other members of the team, and they were working to a very tight time frame and in very heated circumstances over the Christmas period. The work undertaken by her in particular and by her colleagues in general was mighty.

In one way it is appropriate that, in the very last hours of this mandate, we go back to the issues that have, in some

ways, defined this mandate, namely need, welfare dogma, the authority of the Assembly in those matters, and the outcomes that we have reached. It is appropriate to come back to those because, and I say this rather guardedly, we have not seen the half of it. Even if that is not the case, there is certainly more to come.

You have only to read the commentaries over the weekend in advance of the Budget this week to get a sense of where London is positioning itself so soon after the Budget statement. The speculation over the weekend was that the Chancellor would propose in this week's Budget to save £1.2 billion by reforming personal independence payments to the detriment of over 600,000 disabled people. So, having been given false reassurances in the autumn statement, five or six months later we learn of the next phase of welfare reform and welfare cuts that may work itself across the Irish Sea and into the lives and homes of people here.

Given that the Chancellor got it so wrong six months ago, is it not possible, indeed likely, that he will get his call wrong this week as well on where the economy in Britain and Northern Ireland is going? Is there not a possibility that, six months from this week, whoever is in the Chamber will be back again, discussing the next measure that the Chancellor wishes to propose in respect of further budgetary cuts?

4.15 pm

For all those reasons, given London Treasury ambitions and where the economy in Britain and Northern Ireland is, we may well have more pain to swallow beyond what is announced this week. Remember that, whilst the Chancellor wants to pretend that it only means a cut of 50p in every £100, he deliberately neglects to tell everybody that, because certain areas of revenue and budget are protected, that 50p works out at a lot more for those areas that are not protected. In all that you can see a sleight of hand by the Chancellor to hide the true intentions behind what we will discover by the end of this week.

It is utterly remarkable that anybody in this Chamber could say, as a consequence of the mitigation:

"we have lessened the burden ... of an unfettered Tory Government".

Inasmuch as there is £500 million-plus going into mitigation, that is true, but it is not true to claim in the House that we have lessened the burden of an unfettered Tory Government when this Assembly, last November, handed to an unfettered Tory Government the ability to make law on welfare for this part of the world. How dare anyone say to anyone in our community —

Mr Maskey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: In a second. How dare anyone say to anyone in our community that we have lessened the burden of an unfettered Tory Government when we gave power to an unfettered Tory Government to do their worst? You cannot reconcile those comments. How dare anyone in this Chamber say that no one approved that Tory mandate? No, we did not approve that mandate. We did something worse; we gave the Tories their mandate by handing them the power to legislate on welfare in Northern Ireland. I will give way.

Mr Speaker: I will intervene. I want to remind the House what it is that we are discussing. I do not want to rehearse debates that we have had already. We are discussing a statutory rule. I just point that out. You have yet to address that topic, Mr Attwood, and, unless you do, fairly soon, I will intervene and move on.

Will your intervention bring us back to the topic or are you responding to what I regard as another topic of discussion?

Mr Maskey: I had intended to respond briefly, given the inaccuracy —

Mr Speaker: I would rather you did not. I would rather that this stopped here and now and that we returned to the topic. Thank you.

Mr Attwood: Respecting your ruling, Mr Speaker, this is how what I have just said comes right back to the proposals that are being brought by the Minister to this Chamber. I have a question for the Minister on what he is proposing, given what is happening to people in the work-related activity group on ESA. As the Minister is aware, within the last two weeks, the London Government invoked what they refer to as the rule of financial privilege to block House of Lords proposals to resist the reduction of employment and support allowance for people in the work-related activity group from £103 to £73 a week. On two occasions, the House of Lords — that is what we have to rely upon now — blocked proposals by the London Government in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill that will mean a reduction from £103 to £73 a week for people in the ESA work-related activity group. That will apply from April next year for new claimants.

Will the package that the Minister is proposing this afternoon have any impact on any of those people in the work-related activity group, who, on the far side of this legislation, will see their ESA reduced from £103 to £73 a week? That is my question to the Minister, and very relevant it is to the proposals he is making this afternoon. In that answer from the Minister, which I await with interest, will the narrative on all this become clear? The legislation going through Westminster, which this Chamber signed off on in November without a moment of oversight at that time or since, is going to result in that sort of impact on the people in this part of Ireland who are in the ESA work-related activity group, unless I am completely wrong. I am asking the Minister to confirm these questions: is that going to be the case for that category of claimant? Will that category of claimant, in any shape or form, be given any protection whatsoever through the proposals that are being tabled today and that will continue until 2020?

More than that, if there is a reduction from £103 to £73, which is £30 a week and £120 a month, for those relevant qualifying claimants, will they get a penny of mitigation in the new measure that the London Government forced through Westminster by relying on the principle of financial privilege to block the House of Lords? That is the measure of Tory dogma on welfare, and it is the measure of impact that will be upon our citizens. Against that sort of measure, people will need to know whether there will be any penny of mitigation on the far side of the proposals the Minister is making this afternoon.

My second question goes back to the bedroom tax. I want the Minister to be unambiguous — absolutely certain and clear — about this question. On previous occasions, his predecessor indicated in the House that there might be

a category of person who is subject to the bedroom tax and who might not get mitigation in full for that tax. Then it transpired, and I welcomed this, that there appeared to be more certainty in the point that every citizen who was subject to the bedroom tax would get mitigation in full. Some new doubts have arisen about this, so I ask the Minister to be comprehensive and unambiguous in his reply and to confirm: is it or is it not the case that every tenant who is subject to the bedroom tax will get additional funding for each and every penny of the penalty of that tax? Is that or is that not going to be the case, or is there, even at this late stage, some potential that some tenants will not get mitigation in full? I ask the Minister to answer those two questions in his reply. The bedroom tax has been the most punitive of nearly all the measures being proposed by the British Government. In that regard, having certainty, even at this late stage, would be welcome.

Mr F McCann: I will try to be brief on this. I am someone who, from the very outset —

Mr McQuillan: *[Interruption.]*

Mr F McCann: Thanks, Adrian.

I am someone who, since coming into the Assembly, has argued against the introduction of welfare cuts not only in this place but in many public meetings. That is despite the fact that members of the party that just spoke were behind the first introduction of welfare reform in this Building, which included ATOS coming in to oversee the assessments and the sanctions against the tens of thousands of people who have been penalised because of infringements on benefit, as they see it.

We are here to talk about a statutory rule, but in discussions, and even in what they said today, they did not offer a proposal that would bring one pound extra into people's benefits. As a matter of fact, during all the discussions that took place, they were the complete opposite. It is easy to stand up in here and say that you put forward amendments and proposals, but the time to do that was when the discussions were going on between the political parties.

What we are talking about today is freeing up money to allow people to get the additional mitigations. I would have liked the House to be unanimous in that decision so that people could understand what a panel of experts has put together.

Maybe Dolores, who has just left, was at the meeting — maybe she was not, as she was not at that many — when Eileen Evason of the panel said that the bedroom tax was finished. I take it for granted that what those experts said — those experts who were brought in to look at how we can mitigate effectively the worst excesses of welfare reform — sent us a clear message that, although they might not have been fully happy, because they would have liked more money, they were introducing mitigations, within the confines of the money available, that would work for people and give them some help to overcome those worst excesses.

We obviously need to get the regulations through, as we need to ensure that people get the benefits. The tale will be told by the people out there who will get the additional help that the regulations will ensure that they get.

Mr Allister: It is worth reminding ourselves and the public that the regulations form part of a package that, far from putting new money into the pocket of NI plc, will in fact, over the next four years, take half a billion pounds out of our

block grant — out of our expenditure on schools, health, roads and other vital services — for the exclusive purpose of siphoning that money into welfare mitigation measures.

The public need to be aware that that is what the Assembly is being invited to, and it undoubtedly will, vote through, or start a process of voting through, this afternoon. It is a raid on the block grant for that specific purpose, and it is done by a process from which there was very deliberate and calculated abdication by the proponents of the Fresh Start Agreement. Rather than have the courage of their convictions to see through into regulations and to define the details of the mitigations, they abdicated that responsibility to Professor Evason and her team, and they did so in a manner in which, not knowing what she would come up with, they nonetheless blindly committed themselves to accepting whatever she came up with, such was their desperation not to have their own fingerprints on, or the authorship of, whatever was produced. That, no doubt, was to save the blushes of some who had made rash, unsustainable promises about no one now or in the future suffering as a result of welfare cuts. Therefore, part of the political answer to that was to abdicate to the professor and her colleagues the responsibility for deciding how and where the axe would fall and how and where mitigation would arise.

4.30 pm

So what we are doing today is the remarkable outcome of a process where the Ministers in the Executive, before they knew what was in the mitigation package, had committed themselves to accepting whatever it was. The Social Development Minister is but a surrogate, bringing forward the proposals that he and his colleagues had committed themselves to accepting, whatever they might be. That does not speak of government to me. It certainly does not speak of good government, and it does not speak of due scrutiny by an Administration. Rather, it speaks of face-saving and passing the buck. That is what we are seeing.

In these proposals, there is another element of face-saving, because even though Professor Evason produced a unified package of proposals, for the purposes of putting them through this House they have been divided up so that, today, we only have part of her package of proposals: those dealing predominantly with the welfare cap. Other aspects of her proposals have, significantly, been pushed down the road beyond the election. Of course, there is a reason for that, because one of the most obnoxious proposals is that there should be special points given to perpetrators of terrorism — to victim-makers, who, in order to protect their benefits, should be gifted an extra four points when they are transferred across to PIP to ensure that they do not suffer.

It is an obnoxious proposal, and one with which the Minister does not want to dirty his hands this side of the election. Therefore, that aspect of the proposals has been carefully and deliberately pushed to beyond the election, when the Minister knows he will be gone, and someone else can dirty their hands with that proposal. He will wash his hands of it today, by bringing forward only that which excludes it. It is perfectly clear to anyone what is going on.

So not only have we had an abdication in bringing us to this point, and a face-saving and a washing of hands, but we have had a very deliberate pushing down the track of that obnoxious part of the proposals which the Minister and

his party do not want to be seen in ownership of on this side of the election. They know and I know that they are in ownership of it, because they have already committed themselves to the implementation of it. When this House returns, be it with a different Minister or whatever, there are those who hope that, because the election will be gone, it will be less controversial for them to be seen to be dirtying their hands with it, but their fingerprints are all over it.

Lord Morrow: Mr Speaker, I will endeavour to deal with the issues that have been raised today. We have heard a lot of them before, and a lot of the stuff that we heard did not have much relevance to what we are debating today. I think your own intervention was a very timely one, and it brought some Members back to what we are here to discuss and debate today. Whether we can say there is consensus or not might be stretching it a little bit, but at least some have spoken and could see exactly what was trying to be achieved through these regulations. The Executive Committee and the Social Development Committee have adopted a fairly positive stance in relation to what is on offer and what these proposals are all about.

Mr Maskey said something that needs to be corrected. He spoke of a package of, I think, around £585 million: the package, over the four-year period, is £501 million. It is proper that we put that on record.

When Mrs Kelly — Dolores Kelly — got up to speak, she got into a spat with Sinn Féin. I have no interest in entering that spat, at this time anyway, because how they come down on the issue is a matter for her party and Sinn Féin. However, she raised some issues that merit a reply. Maybe, I should reply to those. She commented on the training of staff. I think she asked directly whether staff would be trained to deliver all welfare supplementary payments. That is a pertinent question, and it merits a response. I can tell her in the positive that the Department is working on a detailed training plan that will be tailored to individual job roles and will ensure that staff are adequately trained to administer the welfare supplementary payments, as well as the new benefits introduced as part of the welfare reform, including personal independence payments. I hope that she takes some comfort from that and that that reassures her to some degree.

I was not sure what Mr Attwood was driving at at times, but I suspect that it had more to do with the election than with what we are discussing today. It was quite unbelievable that, in all of his mutterings and rambling from Dan to Beersheba to try to articulate a case, he said — I think Mrs Kelly said the same thing — that this was very late in coming to the Floor, right in the mouth of an election. You are absolutely right, but we could have had this debate a year or 18 months ago, had your party, in particular, stood up and acknowledged what everybody else seems to be acknowledging today: when it comes to financial matters, London is in charge; London is in control. We have never shied away from saying that; those are the facts of the matter. However, it took until today to get the SDLP, in particular, to acknowledge that fact. During all of his contribution, there was not one mention of the exorbitant fines that were imposed because the SDLP would not stand up and face facts. They are standing up today. Then they accused some of us of holding this off until virtually the last day of the term. We had no alternative. Had Mr Attwood, who takes the lead on the issue, given his party

different advice, we could have been over this hurdle 12 months ago, at least, and the millions and millions and millions that were lost because of his inadequacy and his refusal to stand up and be counted would not have been lost. I hope that Mr Attwood takes that on board.

At times, I cannot understand where people are coming from. How many times do they have to be told that the bedroom tax does not apply in Northern Ireland? In fairness to Fra McCann, he was the one who said so, after some people mentioned it. It was Fra McCann who pointed that out, I think, but that seems to have been lost on Mr Attwood. I hope that you have got the message today, at least, that the bedroom tax does not apply in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, he asked if everyone would be mitigated. The answer to that, Mr Attwood, is very clear: the Northern Ireland Executive confirmed in 'A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan' that underoccupancy or:

"the social sector size criteria – the so called bedroom tax – will not apply"

in Northern Ireland. I hope that that goes on the record. The welfare reform mitigations working group, led by Professor Eileen Evason, welcomed that provision of full mitigation of the social sector size criteria for Northern Ireland Housing Executive and housing association tenants. I am considering options that will deliver the Executive's commitment that current and future claimants will not be impacted by the social sector size criteria. I hope that that is also useful.

The Member also asked about employment and support allowance. The best that I can give you today on that is that I will look at it and write to you with details of when the payments will be made to claimants affected by the removal of work-related activity group payments. You can expect some detail from me on that one to make sure that we have the details right.

Mr Attwood also asked whether all claimants would receive a mitigating payment if affected by the benefit cap. I can tell him that a claimant with children who is affected by the benefit cap will be entitled to a mitigating payment, provided they had been continuously in receipt of a relevant payment from this date. The Member asked specific direct questions, and I have tried to answer the ones that I can today directly to him. On the one that I cannot answer, I will come back to him in writing at a later date.

Roy Beggs generally welcomed what we were trying to do, and we thank him for that. He also acknowledged that changes are afoot and there are no certainties. That is a profound statement. I think that it is true: there are no certainties. I think that it was Mrs Kelly and Mr Attwood who referred to the Chancellor bringing more proposals: how true. That just reinforces what some of us have been saying for a long, long time: when it comes to matters financial, London is in control. Some of us have acknowledged that for a long time, and others found it difficult to come to that position, but that is the truth of the matter.

Mr Allister said that I was trying to put stuff back until after the election. No, I am not trying to put anything back beyond the election — absolutely not. If the SDLP and Sinn Féin had stood up, we would have had this through a long time ago. There is a time factor that we just cannot get round. Time is not on our side. No, Mr Allister, I am

not trying to put something back until after the election — absolutely not. I know that you now agree with me on that, so you do. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Allister: I am laughing at you.

Lord Morrow: Well, you can laugh. It would not be the first time that you have done that. Let me say that I hope that you acknowledge that and at least accept that we make an honest effort to get on with what we are trying to do and get it through the House. It is not of our making that we are standing here today: had the SDLP and Sinn Féin got their house in order, we could have been here 12 or 15 months ago. Some of them have now come to that position and accept that London is in charge when it comes to financial matters.

I hope that I have responded to the issues that were raised on the Floor. However, if I have not, we will take a close look at Hansard to see whether there is any issue that should have been addressed and has not been.

The regulations enable the Department to implement mitigation payments to assist claimants impacted by the benefit cap and employment and support allowance time-limiting measures. The measures mean that claimants will be given time to adjust to the impact of welfare reform by providing financial support for up to one year for claimants affected by employment and support allowance time-limiting measures and support for up to four years for claimants affected by the benefit cap. The measures are unique to Northern Ireland and demonstrate our determination to protect the most vulnerable, putting us ahead of the rest of the UK in efforts to do so. Further measures to mitigate welfare reform are being prepared and will be presented to the incoming Executive following the election due to there being no time to do it before then.

I have already outlined why that is the case.

I take this opportunity to thank Members for their interest in the regulations. I hope that they will support them to enable mitigation payments to be made to those affected by the benefit cap and employment and support allowance time limit measures. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

4.45 pm

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Driver and Vehicle Agency Trading Fund Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I beg to move

That the draft Driver and Vehicle Agency Trading Fund Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The order before you today will rename the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA) Trading Fund as the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) Trading Fund and will extend the current funded operations to cover all the remaining functions of the agency. That will bring within the scope of the trading fund driver licensing, taxi and bus licensing and regulation and compliance and enforcement of the transport industry. The order is made under powers contained in the Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. I will briefly set out the background to the order.

A vehicle testing trading fund has been in place since 1 April 1996. It is the only trading fund in Northern Ireland and covers, as set out in the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency Trading Fund Order, all the previous DVTA functions. In 2007, DVTA merged with DVLNI to form the Driver and Vehicle Agency. My Department confirmed at that time that it was not legally necessary to change the scope of the trading fund to include all of DVA, and there was agreement with the Department of Finance and Personnel that DVA would operate as a part-trading fund agency. In effect, there was no change as to how DVA operated with testing functions in the trading fund and licensing functions outwith the fund. However, it was recognised that there would be practical difficulties to be overcome as regards the ring-fencing of trading fund activity and the accounting arrangements. It was, therefore, agreed that the situation should be reviewed in due course, and, today, the Assembly is presented with the outworking of a review process undertaken by my officials as recommended by internal audit.

On balance, it concluded that the whole of DVA should be considered as within the scope of the trading fund, as it is believed that that change has considerable benefits to DVA from both a strategic and operational perspective. In addition, by expanding the range of functions in the order, it will considerably simplify accounting and operational procedures and bring the business focus that a trading fund is designed to engender to all DVA activities. It also supports the work to address the historical legacies from the merger of DVTA and DVLNI and for the agency to operate as a single cohesive entity making best use of all its available resources.

Given the changes to Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments about to take place, the DVA functions as defined in the schedule to the new trading fund order will allow sufficient flexibility to provide for any additional agency functions falling to the new Department for Infrastructure to be considered for inclusion in the trading fund.

In moving the remaining DVA activities into the trading fund, there are a number of key advantages worth highlighting: it allows DVA to adopt a more business-like funding arrangement; it gives more financial flexibility to manage peaks and troughs in fee income; it allows

the accumulation of reserves for investment in future developments, reducing the need for departmental funding; it enables a greater focus on projecting funding requirements to help management in the delivery of demand-led services; and will see a single set of combined annual accounts reporting the results for a single agency.

It is also important to note that my Department has not identified any disadvantages for DVA or its customers in making the change to the current trading fund.

In moving the motion today, I believe that it is important that DVA is fit for purpose as it moves forward in coming years in providing a professional, affordable and responsive service to all its customers in the North, who deserve nothing less. I am in no doubt that, by making this change to its trading fund, we will provide the means for that goal to be achieved. I commend the motion to the Assembly and ask that it affirm the order.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I welcome the opportunity to outline the work that the Committee has undertaken on this statutory rule. The Committee considered the consultation for the draft regulation at its meeting on 2 July 2015. It requested that the Department provide it with a synopsis of responses when that became available. The Committee considered the synopsis of responses at its meeting on 5 November and noted that only two responses were received, which were broadly supportive of the proposals.

The Committee formally considered the rule at its meeting on 29 February. As the Minister outlined, the rule renames the DVTA trading fund as the Driver and Vehicle Agency trading fund and extends its scope to the whole of the DVA, bringing in driver licensing, taxi and bus licensing and regulation, and compliance and enforcement of the transport industry. The Committee noted that the Department laid the synopsis of responses in the Business Office as required by article 10(4) of the Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, and the Department of Finance and Personnel is required to approve the rule. As no concerns were raised during the Committee's considerations, it recommends that the draft regulation is approved by the Assembly.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Chair of the Committee. I ask the Assembly to affirm the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Driver and Vehicle Agency Trading Fund Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I beg to move

That the draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 is being made under section 67(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. Section 67(2) of the 2014 Act provides that a draft of the order must be laid before and approved by a resolution of the Assembly. The draft order makes provision for the Department to specify certain persons and bodies, the functions of which are exercisable in the district of a council, as community planning partners of that council. The named community planning partners will work with the 11 councils in the operation of their duty of community planning. From 1 April 2015, councils are required to make arrangements for community planning in their areas, and the Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 will ensure that key organisations are statutorily part of the process.

While the council has responsibility for facilitating and managing the community planning process, the development of and delivery on the community plan is a shared task between all partners and the council. Community planning partners will be members of the council's community planning partnership and will attend the partnership meetings. Those attending the meetings will be expected to work to agree a community plan. All partners, statutory and non-statutory, will be expected to fully participate in developing community plans and, in doing so, to take a broad view of the needs of the district. It will be a matter for each council to decide upon an appropriate governance structure for its area.

The draft order was subject to an eight-week consultation during late 2014. As a result of the consultation, three organisations were, at their request and with the agreement of their parent Departments, added to the order. They were the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, Libraries NI and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

While it would have been preferable to have the order in place for April 2015, I am pleased to advise Members that its delay has not affected the successful introduction of community planning. The extensive pre-consultation and engagement work carried out by the Department and councils as part of the community planning foundation programme, coupled with the statutory and voluntary bodies' constructive response to the introduction of community planning, has resulted in the building of positive relationships. The proposed statutory partners and Departments continue to cooperate with councils in establishing community planning partnerships on a voluntary basis in anticipation of the legislation now before the Assembly for affirmation.

I am grateful to the Environment Committee for its scrutiny of the draft order. I understand that there have been reservations about the absence of Departments as statutory partners and the new role of CCMS as a statutory partner, given its membership of the Education Authority, which is also a statutory partner.

Mr Weir: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Durkan: Certainly.

Mr Weir: I appreciate and have some sympathy for the concerns raised about CCMS. However, if this legislation were to pass, would that preclude any council from including other bodies involved in the Education Authority? As I understand it, and it was an issue that we dealt with in a different way on the shared education side, CCMS was a body in statute and some of the other representative bodies were not. Would the Minister indicate whether, for example, if a council wanted as one of its planning partners the likes of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Controlled Schools' Support Council or any other body of that nature, there is anything to preclude them from doing that? I suppose the only issue is that it is not named in the legislation.

Mr Durkan: I can assure the Member that councils can add to that list. It is a statutory list of people who have to be in the process, but different councils are going to have different organisations with influence in those council areas that they can also name as partners in the community planning process. My view is that the inclusion of a range of education bodies in the development and delivery of community plans, whether as statutory partners, such as those we are dealing with today, or as support partners, will help to ensure that the widest possible range of views are represented, leading to the best possible outcomes for local people and communities.

Making this order is necessary because community planning is about building effective partnerships that make a real difference to people's lives. Councils are required to establish community planning partnerships and to work collaboratively with statutory bodies and communities to develop and implement a shared vision for districts. The community planning partnerships are to provide leadership to the community planning process. A council and its designated statutory partners will identify the voluntary organisations, private sector organisations and other bodies operating in their area that they will need to help them plan and provide services for their citizens, as well as contribute to achieving relevant regional objectives in the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government. The order will support the relationships between the sectors and is, I believe, an important factor in sustaining local economic growth, social and environmental well-being, and community cohesion.

I ask the Assembly to approve the draft order.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I welcome the opportunity to outline the work that the Committee has undertaken in respect of this statutory rule.

The Committee first considered the outcome of the consultation on the proposed legislation at its meeting on 4 June 2015, when it received an oral briefing from officials. The Committee was provided with a copy of the draft regulation setting out those organisations that would be statutory partners in the community planning process. The Committee is aware that three organisations were added as a result of the consultation process, as the Minister mentioned previously. These were Libraries NI, Sport NI and the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools. The Committee raised concerns at that time that Departments were not named in the order. The Committee wrote to the

Department to highlight its concerns about getting buy-in if Departments are not included in the order as statutory bodies. The Committee was concerned that this may make it difficult to deliver and implement community planning actions and objectives; for example, with no Executive targets and supporting budgets.

5.00 pm

The Committee was advised that the Minister intended to discuss the matter at the Executive with a view to gaining colleagues' agreement to develop a community planning engagement protocol that clearly establishes the nature of the relationship between Departments and local government.

Throughout its consideration of the rule, the Committee consistently sought updates from officials on the progress of the development and content of an engagement protocol. In January, officials advised that the Department had been working with other Departments to help to clarify how this requirement will be given practical expression. The Committee was also assured that all Departments have indicated consistently their commitment to community planning, and many have underlined that commitment through proactive engagement with councils. In addition, the Committee was advised that the partnership panel's agreed work plan identifies the need to develop an engagement protocol that will formalise the local/central government relationship and help to create a positive environment. The Committee is aware that a final draft community planning protocol for Northern Ireland Departments and local government is being developed.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Another issue raised during the Committee's consideration of the draft order was the rationale for the inclusion of the CCMS as a statutory partner, given its membership on the board of the Education Authority, which is also named as a statutory partner. Some members expressed concern that this represented an inequality, as other educational sectors such as the integrated sector are not named as statutory bodies. The Committee was advised that some chose to pursue representation through being a support partner. The Committee asked the Department to explore whether the controlled schools support council (CSSC) could be added as a statutory partner. The body is expected to become operational during the 2016-17 financial year. However, as the CSSC will not be a statutory body and will operate within an advocacy role, it is not possible to name it as a statutory partner in the order, but it can operate as a support partner. The Committee sought clarification on the roles of statutory and support partners. Assurances were provided by the Department that the role of a support partner is no less important than that of a statutory partner in the community planning process and that statutory partners do not have bigger weighting in the decision-making process.

The Committee formally considered the draft rule at its meeting on 3 March. While the reservations of some members of the Committee in respect of these issues were recorded, the Committee agreed to recommend that the rule be approved by the Assembly.

Mrs Cameron: I rise as the DUP lead on the Environment Committee to speak on the Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

First of all, I thank the Chair for outlining in detail how the proposed order has been dealt with at Committee. She outlined that very thoroughly — and I thank her for that — so I will not prolong this debate today.

The Committee was concerned that the Departments are not to be named in the order. There was certainly worry expressed about not having buy-in from the other Departments and what that might mean by way of delivery for community planning, although it was noted that all Departments are committed to the community planning principle.

Mrs Overend, in her time on the Committee, had raised a question about the rationale for CCMS being included, at its request, as a statutory partner, given that it is already represented through the Education Authority. There was certainly concern expressed about the fairness of that situation, and Mrs Overend rightly expressed her concern that CCMS may be at an advantage and possibly have two bites of the cherry. I am content, however, with the clarification provided by the Department that the role of a support partner is not of less importance than that of a statutory partner. Whilst parts of this order are not ideal, the DUP does not have a desire to stop it going through at this stage, but we will listen to the full debate today before making a final decision.

Mr Patterson: As a relatively new Member, I am told that this order came up before the Committee quite regularly over the last 12 months. I believe that it was my predecessor on the Committee, Sandra Overend, who first, rightly, highlighted the problem with the list of bodies. It was not only the omission of major bodies such as the Departments but the specific inclusion of CCMS that concerned my party. Whilst I fully recognise that the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is a very important body in the provision and future planning of education in Northern Ireland, the difficulty that many people have with today's order is the fact that the Education Authority is also listed in the order. Following the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, CCMS was awarded an integral role on the Education Authority, having four members on the board. Indeed, the Minister's own description of those positions is that they:

“represent the interests of trustees of maintained schools”.

This is the fundamental point: CCMS will already have ample opportunity to engage with the community planning process through its prominent position on the local Education Authority, yet it is still to be specifically listed as a stand-alone body in the order as well. If today's order is made, it will be fundamentally unfair, as it will give the CCMS a second bite of the cherry, whilst all other sectors are expected to engage with the process through the means of the Education Authority. The controlled sector will have to work within the authority, and I believe that the integrated sector even turned down the offer of being listed.

Let me be crystal clear: this is not some petty attack on CCMS. This is about ensuring parity in our local education system so that one system does not unwittingly develop a further advantage over another. I am disappointed that the Minister and his officials, for whatever reason, so belligerently refused to genuinely engage with my party on these concerns. I suspect that party political ideology may have once again prevented the Minister from carrying

out his role in the most sensible manner. I am equally disappointed that some other parties also did not support our concerns. I want to make it clear that I oppose today's order, and I urge others to do likewise. If this order is made, it will be setting a very dangerous precedent.

Mr Durkan: First of all, I will just address the point mentioned by Mrs Cameron and expanded upon by Mr Patterson around the role or the naming of CCMS as a statutory partner. The new Education Authority, as we have heard, and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools are among the statutory organisations named in this draft order. CCMS has been included as a statutory partner at its own request; we did not have requests from other organisations involved in education. The Department of Education is in agreement with this approach.

As an organisation, CCMS has specific responsibility for representing the educational interests within its own sector. However, its role as a community planning partner is to work in partnership with others, including the Education Authority, to produce a consensually agreed community plan, assist with monitoring and review of the plan, and seek the participation of the community in carrying out its community planning duties.

I am glad that Mr Patterson told us that this was not a petty attack on CCMS. I do not know who could have dreamt that it was such a thing, but I am disappointed to find that he and his party cannot support this order, which will enable councils to fulfil their community planning duties. The order will support the establishment and continued effectiveness of community planning partnerships and will benefit communities.

I thank the Chair and other members of the Committee who have and will be able to support this motion.

Mr Boylan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Durkan: Certainly.

Mr Boylan: Will the Minister clarify whether there is a mechanism for review of the community planning partners within a year? Is there any mechanism to review that?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. This order puts in statute statutory partners. As I indicated to Mr Weir when he asked a question earlier on this, councils will be able to add partners themselves as support partners. So, other organisations, who maybe do similar work to CCMS but in their own sector, will be able to be added by councils as this process continues.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 69; Noes 11.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Diver, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCreagh, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan,

Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Sheehan, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Diver and Mr Milne.

NOES

Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mrs Overend, Mr Patterson, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kennedy and Mr Patterson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): As a valid petition of concern was presented on Friday 11 March in relation to the motion, the vote will be on a cross-community basis.

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I beg to move

That the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The regulations are being made under section 38 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. Section 127(3) of that Act provides that the draft regulations must be laid before and approved by a resolution of the Assembly. The purpose of the regulations is to set out provisions that must be incorporated in a council's standing orders for the regulation of its proceedings and business; in other words, the regulations provide for the specification of mandatory standing orders. Those add to the governance provisions already contained in the 2014 Act.

Members will be aware that the original draft of the regulations was negatived following a debate on 24 February last year. Concerns were raised during that debate, and I have given them careful consideration. My officials have revisited the content of the draft over the past year, giving detailed examination to the legal issues arising from changes to the original draft of the regulations. As a result, the regulations that I am bringing before the Assembly today include a number of amendments that I will highlight as I go.

The 2014 Act introduced as an integral aspect of the new governance arrangements for district councils mechanisms to provide protections for the interests of minority communities in council decision-making. I wish to underline the fact that the call-in of a decision is already provided for in primary legislation through the 2014 Act. It is therefore important that councils are now provided with a consistent methodology for operating call-in. Doing otherwise could result in processes being adopted by individual councils that may not provide the appropriate protections.

The Act makes provision that a council's standing orders must specify decisions that are required to be taken by a qualified majority. A qualified majority means 80% of the votes of members present and voting on a decision. In support of that, the regulations specify decisions that must be taken by a qualified majority in addition to those already provided for in the Act.

A key mechanism for providing a protection for the interests of minority communities in council decision-making is the introduction of a call-in process. Provision for that process is made in section 41 of the Act. It provides that a council's standing orders must make provision requiring the reconsideration of a decision if 15% of the members of a council present to the clerk of the council a requisition on either or both of the following grounds: that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues or that the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district.

5.30 pm

The main provision in the regulations specifies the process to be adopted by a council for the reconsideration of a decision. The process covers decisions taken by a council, a committee of a council and decisions taken under executive arrangements. A minor amendment has been made to paragraph 4(1)(b) of the schedule to the regulations to specify the timescales within which a key decision taken by an officer of a council must be called in.

The initial draft of the regulations debated by the Assembly provided that a decision on a call-in made under section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act — in other words, a call-in on the grounds of a disproportionate adverse effect on any section of the inhabitants of the district — must be taken by a qualified majority. The main change to the initial draft of the regulations is in relation to a call-in on those grounds. In response to concerns raised during the debate, an amendment has been included to provide for a filter mechanism for called-in decisions, which must be taken by a qualified majority. Schedule 1 to the draft regulations has been revised to enable the opinion of a practising barrister or solicitor to act as a filter mechanism to decide which called-in decisions must be taken by a qualified majority. The draft regulations now specify that, where this opinion indicates a risk that the decision is outside the powers of the council, is incompatible with EU law or convention rights or is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme in so far as it relates to equality of opportunity within the meaning of section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, a qualified majority is required.

A consequential amendment has also been made to paragraph 4 of the schedule to the draft regulations to take account of the proposed amendment to paragraph 1 of the schedule. In paragraph 4(8)(b), the words:

“at which it must be taken by a qualified majority”

have therefore been omitted.

A decision to suspend a council's standing orders would also require a qualified majority as specified in the regulations. A council may not, however, suspend the mandatory standing orders prescribed by the regulations in any circumstances. The specification of these additional decisions will provide further support for the protection of the interests of minority communities in council decision-making.

I wish to underline that the call-in of a decision is already provided for in primary legislation. It is therefore important, as I said, that councils are now provided with a consistent methodology for operating call-in. The regulations provide that a small number of categories of decision will not be subject to the reconsideration process. They include decisions where there is already statutory provision for an appeal against the decision of the council; for example, the granting of an entertainments licence or a planning application. Decisions where an undue delay would result in the breach of a statutory duty by a council or where such a delay would be prejudicial to either the council's or the public interest are also excluded from the reconsideration process, as are decisions that simply note a report from or the actions of an officer. The final category of decisions that will not be subject to the reconsideration process are those that must be taken by a special resolution of the

council, as such decisions are required to be approved by more than a simple majority.

The third aspect of the new governance arrangements for which provision is made in the regulations relates to the operation of either the d'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë method for filling positions of responsibility. The regulations provide the timescales for the relevant steps in the process specified in the 2014 Act. These provisions should ensure that the process for filling positions of responsibility by one of these methods at the first meeting of a council following a local election is not prolonged unnecessarily. The provision of the ability of a council to extend this time frame ensures that there is the flexibility necessary to accommodate exceptional circumstances, should the need arise.

When the 2014 Act was being considered by the Assembly, Members agreed that provision should be made for the procedure for appointing councillors to committees. This is to ensure that the membership of a committee reflects the political balance of the council. It was agreed that that should apply across all committees if a council appoints more than one committee at the same meeting.

Such an approach ensures that political parties with lower levels of representation on a council and independents have the opportunity to serve on a committee. Part 4 of the schedule to the regulations specifies the procedure that must operate in these circumstances. The procedure closely follows the provisions in the Assembly's Standing Orders for membership of Statutory Committees.

I ask the Assembly to approve the draft regulations.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I welcome the opportunity to speak in today's debate to outline the work that the Committee for the Environment has undertaken in respect of the statutory rule.

Following the Assembly's decision in February to not approve the rule, officials wrote to the Committee to outline the revisions it had made following concerns raised during that debate. The Committee considered that correspondence at its meeting on 1 October and invited officials to brief it on 8 October and 5 November.

Officials outlined to the Committee the Department's efforts to address the concern raised that the opinion of a practising barrister or solicitor did not act as a filter for decisions requiring a qualified majority when one was obtained after a request for reconsideration was made on the grounds that the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district. To address the issue, the Department revised the draft regulations to take account of circumstances where the opinion of the barrister or solicitor indicates that there is a risk that the decision is outside the powers of the council, is incompatible with EU law or convention rights or is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme. Under the revised draft regulations, a qualified majority is required, thereby providing a filter mechanism.

Some members of the Committee expressed concerns that the test for legitimacy included compliance with the council's equality scheme but not whether the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of inhabitants. Officials advised that they had sought legal advice on whether provision could be made to require a qualified majority on a council's decision on a call-in where the opinion obtained indicated that the members had

demonstrated that the decision would disproportionately affect adversely a section of the inhabitants of the district. The legal advice concluded that that would be ultra vires.

Another issue explored by some members of the Committee was the differences and variations of equality schemes across the 11 council areas. Officials have further revised the draft regulations to provide that a qualified majority would be required where the legal opinion indicated that there was a risk that the decision would not be in compliance with the council's equality scheme, in so far as it relates to equality of opportunity within the meaning of section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Other concerns expressed by members of the Committee included the fact that the opinion of only one barrister or solicitor would be sought, because their view may differ significantly from that of another barrister or solicitor. Also, the opinion might come from someone who does not live within the council area affected by the decision. Therefore, the Committee explored with the officials the option of setting up a panel of solicitors to provide the legal opinions. At that time, officials advised the Committee that they were preparing a paper for the Minister on options for setting up such a panel. The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the statutory rule until the Minister considered this issue. On 26 February, the Committee considered further correspondence from the Department providing an update on the Minister's considerations. The Committee was advised that the setting up of a panel of solicitors could place additional financial burdens on councils and have HR implications for councils with in-house legal teams. Therefore, the Minister concluded that it would not be appropriate to further revise the draft regulations at this stage to provide for a panel.

Officials advised that, as the policy would take some time to consider and develop, as consultation would be required on its establishment and operation, it would not be possible to reach a way forward in this mandate. The Department wanted to proceed with the making of the regulations while the work in relation to a panel was ongoing, as these elements were not dependent on each other. The Department advised that it would be beneficial to see the call-in procedure in operation for a period in order that a full assessment of the requirements could be completed and to provide a statutory link between the process of reconsidering a decision and qualified majority voting.

The Committee formally considered the draft regulations at its meeting on 10 March, noting that the rule is subject to the approval of the Assembly. Some members expressed concerns and reservations about the proposals. While the Committee recommended that the rule be approved, some members abstained.

That concludes my remarks as Chairman of the Environment Committee. I would now like to add some comments as a member of the Alliance Party. I supported the draft regulations in Committee, but it was not clear to me what the other parties' reservations were when they abstained. I will listen carefully to their deliberations during this debate. I understand the rationale for the three criteria on which a solicitor or barrister must base his or her opinion when determining whether a council decision may adversely impact on a section of the inhabitants of the district. I would hope that the councils' equality schemes would be robust enough to ensure equality and fairness to any section of the community, and that any

council decision with the potential to breach conditions in the scheme would be seen by the solicitor as eligible for qualified majority voting.

I agree with the Minister that having a panel of solicitors could lead to unnecessary costs and HR implications for those councils with in-house solicitors.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Chair for outlining the Committee's deliberations on this regulation at Committee. It is important to state at the outset that my party is concerned with this regulation — so much so that it tabled a petition of concern on the matter. The DUP would have preferred to have seen the original wording from the Bill replicated in the regulations, so as not to move away from the intention of the Bill in relation to the call-in procedure. I understand that the revised regulation was drafted on the back of legal opinion, but the DUP is not satisfied with the move away from the wording to test the legitimacy of the call-in where it would:

“disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants”.

That was the wording of the Act, which talks about:

“compliance with the council's equality scheme”.

Let us not forget the real potential that we could have 11 variations of equality schemes across Northern Ireland.

I also note that the Minister has not felt able to draft regulations on the setting up of a panel of solicitors at this stage.

I regret that our party is unable to support the motion.

5.45 pm

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom labhairt i bhfabhar na rialach reachtúla seo. I will speak in favour of this rule and the order.

It is with some disappointment, I have to say, that we had to put it to the vote in the Committee. I thought we made some progress, and I want to put on the record that, over the last five years, those in the Environment Committee have worked very well together to bring forward a number of pieces of legislation to the Assembly. I am a wee bit disappointed. After all, we are transferring powers down to local authorities and are trying to give them the best opportunities to make the right decisions for all our constituents and all in our community. It should be regarded as one community, and I think that, in bringing this forward, we had a good opportunity to do that.

To speak on the matter at hand, the purpose of the standing orders is to provide the basic operating rules that our councils should work from. It is now coming up to a year since the formation of the new councils and almost two years since the formation of the shadow councils. It is incredible that we still do not have basic standing order operating rules in place.

Standing orders for any of the councils are meant to give expression to the operational technicalities on the important safeguarding measures for minority groupings. Sinn Féin views as critically important the need for robust safeguards and checks and balances for the protection of minority groupings as envisaged under the Local Government Act 2014. The standing orders provide the

detail of how exactly the powers to require councils to have decisions reconsidered will be used.

The petition of concern is opposing an amendment that was made to the Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations to consider when a call-in is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme. This is how it reads:

“The proposed wording of paragraph 1 of the schedule to the draft regulations has now been further revised to provide that a qualified majority would be required where the legal opinion indicates a risk that the decision is outside the powers of the council, is incompatible with EU law or Convention rights” —

— this is the key issue:

“is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme in so far as it relates to equality of opportunity within the meaning of section 75(1) of the NI Act 1998”.

I want to put this to the parties that are going to oppose this: I am interested in knowing why this petition of concern has been brought to the House on equality. How does ensuring equality of opportunity threaten any of us? That is the question. I have not heard anything about that so far, but I will listen to the debate. That is the key point: how does it threaten anybody?

I welcome the amendment. I think it is forward-looking and inclusive. I also welcome that, as part of the discussions, a Sinn Féin delegation and I met the Minister on 16 February and presented a paper to him on this issue. We emphasised to him that the primacy had to be afforded to the duty on equality schemes when any call-in decision was being reconsidered. On that day at that meeting, we reached what I thought was a consensus that the amendment needed to be included. I welcome the cooperation with the Minister on that.

The amendment is included to safeguard equality as defined in section 75(1) and to ensure the primacy of the equality of opportunity in all matters relating to community planning. The key part of section 75(1) talks about protecting all members of our society regardless of age, gender, religious background, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, marital status, disability status or, indeed, dependency status.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for giving way.

This really goes to the heart of why some of us were quite reluctant to give additional powers to local councils. We have seen the abuse of power so often in the past on local authorities — for example, on funding for some groups. It was Arlene Foster, in fact, who said that these protections were critical to the review of public administration legislation when she was Minister of the Environment. Is the Member, like me, at a loss to understand why the DUP would not only vote against the regulations but put down a petition of concern?

Mr Boylan: I thank the Member for her intervention. I totally agree. As I said, I cannot understand it.

I want to say this again, because it is important. I want to know, from those Members who are opposing the regulations today, how ensuring equality of opportunity threatens any of us. I will listen when they rise to speak to hear why. I read out the section 75 groups, and I would like to hear some answers from Members that explain to

me how the regulations threaten any of us. If we look at the make-up of councils right across the North, what might suit one might not suit another, and we could be setting precedents here. The Minister has taken the time to try to deal with the matter effectively, so I will listen to Members to hear how they answer my question and deal with the issue in respect of constituents and minority rights.

The amendment is to ensure that measures to promote equality of opportunity are not diluted, discontinued or otherwise prejudiced on the basis of concerns that they will impact on good relations.

This is the second time that there has been a petition of concern on the matter, and that is very disappointing. I support the Minister in bringing forward the regulations.

I take this opportunity to thank the Chair for the way in which she has chaired the Committee for the Environment over the past number of years and wish her every success in whatever she desires to do in the future. I also thank Alban Maginness for his contribution to the Committee and to society in the North of Ireland. I wish him the very best for the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I call Mr Alban Maginness. In doing so, I plead with Members to afford the Member speaking the courtesy of being listened to.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank Mr Boylan for his kind words to my good self.

The Environment Committee works extremely well under the very capable leadership of Anna Lo, and I have adverted to that before. Pam Cameron as Deputy Chair has played a significant role in the work of the Committee.

It is regrettable that we have this political disagreement over the regulations that the Minister has reintroduced. I know that they were defeated last February. On foot of the motion on the regulations being negatived then, the Minister and the Department worked assiduously to try to remedy the problems that were highlighted during the debate. It is a tribute to the Minister that he was big enough — tall enough — to deal with the issue, show political flexibility and try to be conciliatory in his approach to the political problem. I understand that colleagues in the DUP have a problem with the new draft regulations presented to the House, but, along with other colleagues throughout the Chamber, I am at a loss to understand at this point the nature of their objections.

I think that there is an onus on those who object to the regulations to come to the House, and, in a straightforward, intelligible fashion — I am not trying to impugn Mrs Cameron's presentation — outline what the problem is with the revisited regulations. I do not know what could be more exhaustive than the regulations as expressed in the draft today, because you are dealing with a situation where the council would be acting *ultra vires*, that is, outside its powers, and outside European Union law. Perhaps we might have to remedy that in the near future if there is a Brexit. I will leave that aside; perhaps this is too serious a matter for me to joke about.

The other aspect is where the council contravenes human rights in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and even if we have a Brexit, the ECHR will still be there. The main point is where a council would be acting outside the equality scheme that it had agreed to, and that is consistent with section 75 of the Northern

Ireland Act 1998. I cannot think of anything beyond that that can be considered, because it is, to my mind, an exhaustive list of things that should be considered, which are pertinent to a decision, and which could impact in a disproportionate and adverse manner on the inhabitants of a council. It seems to me that the Minister has honestly, and in a spirit of conciliation, addressed the issues that were originally raised about these regulations. I am genuinely at a loss to understand the attitude of colleagues across the Floor.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that, in the absence of the regulations, there is a real risk that each council will interpret the legislation differently? What we will have are councils operating their own structure and inequalities, and a postcode lottery for minority groups right across the North.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Member for her intervention. I think that she has put her finger on it. This will become, literally, a postcode lottery in the interpretation of how qualified-majority voting should take place and in dealing with, or addressing, problems of minorities in council areas. It is a serious issue and one that should be remedied now. Unfortunately, it will not be remedied because of the petition of concern, and the only way to remedy it is to vote for these regulations. I am leaving the petition of concern aside, but that is probably a futile hope. There could have been a more mature approach. I am sure that these matters could be revisited at some time in the future; now, however, is, I think, the operative time, because we have had the councils operating for two years. I know that one of them is in preliminary shadow mode, and the other is in full operation.

It seems to me that we need to get on with it. Mrs Cameron has said that she wants to see section 41, I presume, reflected in the standing orders. In my view, this gives full expression to section 41. I cannot see how you could readjust the regulations to express the standing orders differently. As Dolores Kelly quite rightly said, you want a uniform application of this throughout the 11 councils; you do not want a deviation, particularly at this early stage of the political development of councils. For those reasons, I am happy to support the Minister in relation to the regulations.

6.00 pm

Mr Patterson: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the regulations as the Ulster Unionist Party environment spokesperson. However, I have read the transcript of the debate from last February, and it certainly seems to be a case of *déjà vu* all over again. Of course, not only is the Department trying to push through effectively the same regulation under the smokescreen of slightly tightened wording, but we have the DUP using and abusing a mechanism designed to protect communities to block a mechanism designed to protect communities. You really could not make it up. What a depressing debate on the penultimate day of what many consider to have been a pretty uninspiring Assembly term.

As has been said, the 2014 Act stipulated that councils' standing orders must include issues such as specifying the decisions that would require a qualified majority, and provision for reconsideration or call-in of a decision if requested by 15% of the members of a council. That could be done on grounds of the decision not being made after proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues, or

where it would disproportionately affect in an adverse way inhabitants of the district.

I am aware that concerns were raised previously that the provision no longer allowed the opinion of the barrister or solicitor to act as a filter for those decisions that would require a qualified majority. In reality, however, given the likelihood of differing legal opinions on the same issue, I suspect that it will not have been the safeguard that the DUP initially thought it would. Other concerns raised during the progression of the Bill are still valid to this day. For instance, the Act and today's regulations talk about a disproportionate adverse impact, without giving even the slightest indication of what would constitute such an impact. Maybe the Minister could provide some long overdue clarity.

Some weeks ago, the officials were before the Committee again to explain these regulations. What struck me most in their evidence was the reference to how they could not proceed with a panel of legal advisers because there was no time. The issue was first mooted over two years ago. There would have been time then. It was talked about again last February. There would have been time then. In fact, there would have been time to consult and implement such a panel when the Department spoke to the Committee last November. Yet, in reality, they spent so long saying that they did not have time to set it up that they actually squandered more than ample opportunity to do so. Frankly, the whole thing is farcical.

The revised regulations now specify that, where the legal opinion indicates a risk that the decision is outside the powers of the council, is incompatible with EU law or convention rights or is not in compliance with a council's equality scheme, a qualified majority would be required. Of course, it took only the most basic research to realise that all the councils across Northern Ireland have slightly differing equality schemes.

Whilst I am glad that the Department eventually fixed its wording, it was indicative of a wider lapse of attention. Instead, what we have before us is just a fig leaf; a smokescreen to save the blushes of the Department, which has really bungled the roll-out of these standing orders.

That having been said, regulations are needed for local government at council level right across Northern Ireland. Councils require uniformity of practice, and they need to receive guidance from the Department of the Environment. As I said, I am disappointed that the necessary progress was not made on the matter, but we are content to support the Department, as most councils are largely already acting in the manner that is proposed. We will support the matter.

I want to conclude my remarks by paying tribute to our Committee Chair on her chairing of the Committee. In my short time on the Committee, I have seen that there is no doubt that she is indeed a very special lady. I want to wish her well as she retires. I also want to mention my fellow Committee member Alban Maginness, who also retires at the end of the Assembly term. In the short time that I have been here, I have found Alban to be a very honourable and sincere man. I wish him well in his retirement.

Mr Weir: First of all, I would like to associate myself with the latter remarks of the Member who spoke previously. Some time ago, I managed to find an escape route out of the Committee for the Environment, but, for many years, I served under the chairmanship of Ms Lo and alongside Mr

Maginness. While today, as on other occasions, I do not find myself in the same position as them on the debate, I certainly pay tribute to the efforts that they have made, particularly on environmental issues down the years. I suppose that this may be the closest that either of them will be able to get to going to their own funeral without the inconvenience of dying beforehand. From that point of view, I wish them well in whatever path the rest of their lives take. The Assembly will be the poorer place for the loss of both of them.

Having set out that spirit of comradeship across the Chamber, I will now devalue all of it by obviously opposing the Minister's position, really on two grounds. As a degree of background, I was not quite sure where the previous Member who spoke would end up. He ended up eventually supporting it. It does seem as though he could just as easily have gone against it. Nevertheless, he does at least make one valid point on the issue of timing. I have two particular concerns with these regulations. I should say in deference to a previous Member who spoke that these are regulations, not amendments. Nevertheless, I have two particular problems with the Minister's position.

First of all, there is an absence and missed opportunity to provide something a little bit more objective by way of a panel. I think that the previous Member who spoke mentioned how this was brought in November. It was mentioned two years ago. It actually goes back quite a number of years. For my sins, in a previous existence, I served on the policy development panel A, which dealt with many of these issues. At that stage, it was flagged up that we needed some form of objective measurement and indeed somebody to objectively take the decision. At that stage, it was not going to be simply referral to an individual, but perhaps looking at some form of panel. This is actually something that has been discussed for quite a number of years, yet it is disappointing that we have this missed opportunity. That however might be the more minor complaint.

The issue does arise around the test of whether something is a legitimate call-in or non-legitimate call-in. Here I would take exception to some of Mr Maginness's remarks that this is, if you like, as close as you will get to section 41. My concern is that this moves too far away from section 41. I appreciate that the Minister has created a level of tweaking that has moved it at least a little in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. I am a little bit at a loss to understand why the language of section 41 cannot be imputed into the regulations, if indeed the issue is, in some way, that this would be ultra vires. I find that very difficult to accept because that is the exact wording that was used in the legislation. Either we are in the position that the 2014 legislation was completely flawed and should have been thrown out at that stage or alternatively it is wrong now.

However it is circumscribed by way of equality of opportunity, Mrs Kelly and Mr Maginness make a point that we do not want a postcode lottery on equality to tie in, ultimately, with a range of council equality schemes. Concern has been raised on a number of occasions, for example on issues such as McCreesh Park, where equality seems to mean different things in different parts of the country. To tie in specifically what counts as a breach of equality of opportunity with 11 different equality schemes seems, to me, to go in the wrong direction. This moves further away from equality than what is in the 2014

Act. At least, in that Act, we have a guide to standing orders. I think that it is important —

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: Yes, I will give way.

Mrs D Kelly: On the very subject of McCreesh Park and that bad and flawed decision, does the Member agree that these very regulations would prevent such a situation from happening?

Mr Weir: Unfortunately, apart from anything else, it may be shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted, in the same way as the Member's party initially allowed it to go through and then had a change of heart but found that it was too late. The problem is that, on McCreesh Park, if the test is against the judgement of section 41, which is that it disproportionately disadvantages a community, then that would block McCreesh Park. I do not know precisely what the council equality scheme of Newry and Down council is, and, in fact, that may allow McCreesh Park, or it may not. That is the problem. It creates a lot more of a subjective test than the objective test of the legislation. That is the flaw.

Like others, I am disappointed that we have come to this situation, and I hope that when we resume the issue we will manage to crack it and get it right. I think that it is more important to get it right than push something through today that is fundamentally flawed and that, in the words of the party opposite, will create a postcode lottery as regards equality. That is the fundamental flaw, and that is why we have been forced to take the position that we have taken.

Mrs D Kelly: I have to come back to the point about the equality schemes. It is not just equality schemes; they are informed by equality legislation and guidance on a plethora of responsibilities that fall to local councils. So, they are not that diverse. Therefore, one in particular in relation to McCreesh Park, which Mr Weir has conceded could have been protected against if the regulations had been in place —

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: If I could just finish.

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. I am a bit concerned that the Member is misquoting me. I said that if it was based on section 41, then it would have prevented that happening. I have actually said the opposite as regards these; it may or may not be the case. That is the problem. We are moving to a position that gives less protection than would have been there under section 41.

Mrs D Kelly: I have a different interpretation. I was going on to say that all councils have a statutory responsibility to promote good community relations. Therefore, I think that that ought to have been the protection that could and ought to have been used in relation to the naming of McCreesh Park. Furthermore, I think that I am right in saying that, in the media last week, there was a call-in from Antrim and Newtownabbey council around funding bonfires. What is happening around some of them is disenfranchising one part of the community because some of the activities around bonfires are clearly not designed to promote good community relations. So, I believe that there ought to be a real sense of responsibility by local authorities around that particular statutory obligation. This strengthens the hand of those who wish to implement good community relations across all 11 council areas.

Members, particularly those on the Benches opposite, may recall the then party leader Mr Robinson saying to his party conference in November 2011:

"If we want a better society it can't be them and us".

I think that, in the same year, he made a speech in this very Chamber and said that this mandate ought to be about delivery. It is absolutely mind-boggling how, in an extended year of this mandate, we are having to deal with all the regulations around the review of public administration, which was a feature of the portfolio of the party opposite's Environment Minister for many years. Indeed, as I said earlier, the then Environment Minister, Arlene Foster, said that the regulations, in terms of protecting minority communities, were an essential part of the review of public administration.

6.15 pm

We tend to describe the communities in the North as the two main communities, but, thankfully, we have an increasingly diverse population right across the North, and these protections would protect them as much as any other minority community. The last thing that this party wants to see is a Balkanisation of the local authorities across the North. We warned that RPA was shaping up to draw an orange and green map of Northern Ireland. It is not necessarily just a protection of minorities meaning Catholic and Protestant or nationalist and unionist, but, in some councils, I suggest, it is about protecting those whose communities are seen to mostly favour one party or the other. It tends to be the parties in the ascendant and those that have the main reins of power on those councils.

I do not know what people have to fear from equality. I served for over 17 and a half years in Craigavon. Mind you, it was no good example of how —

Mr Wells: They made you mayor. Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: No, I will not give way.

Mr Wells: They made you mayor.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order, please. I call on the Member to please respect the House in its last couple of days and to not make remarks from a sedentary position. Mrs Kelly, continue.

Mrs D Kelly: I will answer. He says they made me mayor: my party was one of the main parties in Craigavon for over 40 years and, in two years, we got mayor. It was not the DUP but the Ulster Unionist Party that reached an agreement and a compromise and supported that. In fact, the then member of the Ulster Unionist Party who is now a Minister, Jonathan Bell, resigned when I got to be deputy mayor of Craigavon and went as an independent. I will take no lectures on the historical background of how I became mayor or deputy mayor of Craigavon. Mind you, the DUP should not chirp in so much about it: they did not get it very often either at one time.

It is those very things. There was a report last week about the cost of division in the North: £833 million. Earlier, we were treated to a response from Minister Morrow on welfare regulations, and he said that the financial reins were not within our grasp. If we were to resolve the issue of a divided society and build a truly shared future, which we have spectacularly failed to do over the last five years, we

would have an awful lot more money to put into the front-line public services that we want to see and more money to mitigate the worst excesses of Tory welfare reform.

I do not get it. I really do not get it, and I do not believe that Ms Cameron was truly passionate about her contribution at the start of the debate when she referred to the petition of concern. We have seen abuse after abuse of petitions of concern, and it is probably fitting that, in the last days of this Assembly, we see yet another petition of concern that works against equality and against regulation to protect minorities' rights. It says a lot about what Mr Robinson said in November 2011:

"If we want a better society it can't be them and us".

It shows a spectacular failure to deliver on that promise and that commitment. Let us hope that the next mandate will see parties who truly want to build a reconciled future being given a stronger hand. Some people stay at home and think that they cannot make a difference: the people who are staying at home are putting a lot of people in power here who want to vote against equality. I hope that people will be mindful of that when they go to the ballot box on 5 May.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I will be extremely generous and pretend I have not had a challenge from my right, and I will call the Minister, Mr Mark Durkan, to conclude and wind up the debate on the motion.

Mr Durkan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The regulations will add detail to the new governance arrangements for councils provided in the 2014 Act and ensure that a consistent approach is adopted by councils to protecting the interests of minority communities in their decision-making and to the sharing of membership of committees across the political parties and independents. They make the important link between call-in and qualified majority voting in order to give practical effect to the arrangements for the protection of the interests of minorities in council decision-making. Opposition to the regulations, therefore, clearly demonstrates not only a lack of regard for minorities but a blatant lack of recognition of who would be afforded the protections and where. The irony that a petition of concern — a mechanism designed to protect minorities — is being misused today to deny minorities protections should not be lost on anyone.

Mr Patterson wanted clarification around —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Could I, please, ask the Minister to resume his seat? Because of people incessantly talking on my right, I am having difficulty following what the Minister says. Could I ask those Members please to take their conversations outside if they are going to be prolonged? Continue.

Mr Durkan: Do you want me to start again? *[Laughter.]* You did not miss much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was just addressing a question that Mr Patterson asked. He wanted clarification of what would constitute a disproportionate adverse impact. I was going to say that is probably where there is an impact that could be adverse and disproportionate. *[Laughter.]* The Member described this Assembly term as fairly uninspiring: I would like to congratulate the Member on how well he has fitted in. *[Laughter.]* I would, however, echo Mr Patterson's words of praise and gratitude to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Ms Lo. I would like to think that I, as Minister, have worked closely and, usually, effectively not just

with the Chair but with the Committee as a whole. Unfortunately, we are not seeing that today in this final debate of the session.

The regulations are the final piece of subordinate legislation remaining to be made under the 2014 Act. It would have been desirable to put this final piece of the jigsaw in place before the end of the Assembly mandate, but today, thanks to the DUP, that jigsaw will not be completed. However, I take some comfort from Mr Weir's pledge that the DUP will be prepared to come back, sit down and look at how we will finish the jigsaw after the elections.

I thank Members for their contributions.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Members, before we proceed to the Question, I remind you that a valid petition of concern has been presented. The vote on this motion requires cross-community support.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 48; Noes 33.

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Mr Diver, Mr Durkan, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist:

Mr Allen, Mr Beggs, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mrs Overend, Mr Patterson, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Diver and Mr Milne.

NOES

Unionist:

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Lyons, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>[59.3%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>[28.3%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>

Question accordingly negated (cross-community vote).

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Local Government Auditor's Draft Code of Audit Practice 2016

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I beg to move

That the Local Government Auditor's draft Code of Audit Practice 2016 be approved.

Article 5(1) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 requires the Local Government Auditor to prepare and keep under review a code of audit practice that prescribes the way in which local government auditors carry out their functions in relation to district councils and other local government bodies. Article 5(2) of the 2005 Order provides that such a code shall embody what appears to the Local Government Auditor to be the best professional practice with respect to the standards, procedures and techniques to be adopted by auditors.

Article 5(3) of the 2005 Order provides that a code will not come into force until approved by a resolution of the Assembly and that its continuation in force is subject to its being so approved at intervals of not more than five years. The existing code of audit practice came into force on 1 April 2011. The Local Government Auditor consulted interested parties about the proposed draft code of audit practice 2016. The 12-week consultation period ended on 1 December 2015. Ten responses were received as part of the consultation. I am therefore seeking the Assembly's approval for the Local Government Auditor's draft code of audit practice 2016 to come into force on 1 April 2016.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I welcome the opportunity to outline the work that the Committee has undertaken in respect of the Local Government Auditor's draft code of audit practice.

The Committee first considered the consultation on the code at its meeting on 17 September 2015. It agreed at that time to request a synopsis of responses to the consultation when it became available. The Committee noted the synopsis of responses at its meeting on 3 March 2016 and also considered the draft code of audit practice, which had been formally laid in the Business Office. The Committee was content and agreed formally, on 10 March, to recommend that it be approved by the Assembly.

As this is the last time that I will speak as Chair of the Environment Committee, I would like to take the opportunity to thank, most sincerely, all the officials from each of the Department's business areas for their engagement with Committee members over the mandate. I thank the Minister for making himself and his staff available and for keeping the Committee informed, allowing it to undertake its scrutiny role effectively.

I would also like to thank all members of the Committee, past and present, for their invaluable insight and contributions. I think that we have worked really well as a Committee. In particular, I thank Mr Alban Maginness. I have always found him to be very reasonable and balanced in his deliberations, and I wish him a very happy retirement. I also want to thank Members for their kind words as regards my role as Chair. Last, but not least, I pay tribute to all of our Committee staff, past and present, for their hard work in support of the Committee over the

last five years. Without them, we could not have worked as efficiently as we have done.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I now call the Minister of the Environment to conclude and wind up the debate on the motion.

Mr Durkan: Moved. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Local Government Auditor's draft Code of Audit Practice 2016 be approved.

Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Storey (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I beg to move

That the draft Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Section 9 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 requires that this revaluation order is made. It specifies the annual change in the level of prices as tracked by the consumer price index (CPI). A similar order has been laid in Westminster that will apply for the equivalent pension schemes in Great Britain, which will be revalued in an identical manner.

In background to this order, Members will be aware that the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 sets out requirements for new and reformed pension schemes for public service employees with effect from 1 April 2015. Under the Act, the default design for these new schemes is a career average revalued earnings (CARE) model. In a CARE scheme, each member builds up a fraction of their average annual earnings as pension for each year of membership of the scheme. This fraction is known as the accrual rate. At the end of each year, the pension built up by each member is also revalued.

Different schemes revalue members' benefits in different ways, as specified in each scheme's regulations. These regulations have been subject to consultation between Departments with responsibility for the main schemes and their employee representatives, during policy development and consultation for each CARE scheme. In all cases, the revaluation process will include reference to a cost of living index, which tracks annual changes in the level of prices or earnings.

In Northern Ireland, as is the case for the equivalent schemes in Great Britain, a reference to the change in prices is used for the purpose of revaluation by each of the main public service pension schemes for the following: Civil Service; local government; teachers; health service; police; and the devolved judiciary.

The prices revaluation order will be used by these main public service pension schemes as part of the scheme's process for annually revaluing pension benefits accrued by active members for the scheme year from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The current measure used to track changes in prices is the CPI. The order specifies the published CPI figure that is relevant for 2015-16, which is minimis of 0.1%.

6.45 pm

As I pointed out, the order will be used by schemes in line with the individual revaluation process put in place in their regulations at the inception of the new CARE schemes, and the effects will vary accordingly. Where scheme regulations specify a revaluation with reference to a flat rate of CPI only — for the Civil Service, local government and the devolved judiciary — scheme members will see a slight negative revaluation in their 2015-16 CARE annual pension earned. For example, revaluation for local government and Civil Service workers on a salary of £21,000 will see a negative revaluation of their accrued pension by less than 50p. Those who are on a salary of

£36,000 will see a negative revaluation of their accrued pension by less than £1. In all other cases where the schemes themselves have undertaken to augment the revaluation factor in scheme regulations by an additional percentage amount, the overall revaluation will be a positive figure. For example, a health service worker on a salary of £21,000 will see their accrued pension revalued by around £5.44 and a health service worker on a salary of £36,000 will see their accrued pension revalued by £9.33.

The level of revaluation is predicated on the prevailing economic conditions. The overarching provisions for revaluation contained in the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 are necessarily and purposely designed to track changes in prices or earnings, whether positive or negative. If the reality of negative growth were overlooked, scheme costs would rise and these additional costs would be loaded onto schemes and taxpayers.

Revaluation is just one element which determines how a public service pension increases each year. The other key element is the accrual rate — the percentage by which pension pots build up on an annual basis. Accrual factors also vary with each scheme, and where a scheme design includes a CPI-only linked revaluation this may be offset by a faster accrual rate in the scheme, depending on the scheme design put in place by the individual responsible Departments at the policy development stage of that scheme. The indexation factor combined with the accrual rate factor means that pension pots are still continuing to grow. These pensions remain a good deal for members and a valuable component of the public service remuneration package.

I thank the Committee for Finance and Personnel for its consideration of the proposed order. I note that the Committee is content and has not raised any issues in relation to the order. The Examiner of Statutory Rules has raised no issues on the technical competence of the order. There is no direct equality impact associated with the making of the order. As I have stated already, it is a statutory requirement of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 that the order is made each year to specify the annual change in prices relevant to those schemes whose regulations require a revaluation with reference to prices. Equality screening of individual scheme regulations was completed by responsible Departments during the policy development for each scheme.

In conclusion, the Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 fulfils the obligation set out in the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, requiring the Department of Finance and Personnel to make an annual order that specifies the annual change in prices where this is relevant to the revaluation process contained in regulations for a public service pension scheme. I, therefore, commend the order to the House.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As the Minister has outlined, the order will make provisions to specify the annual percentage changes in prices in order to effect a revaluation of pension benefits for members of CARE public service pension schemes. The revaluation process will include a reference to a cost of living index, which tracks annual changes in the level of prices or earnings as measured in the CPI.

The policy proposals contained in the rule were formally considered by the Committee on 17 February. After consideration, the Committee confirmed that it had no comment to make on the policy proposals at that stage. The rule was laid before the Assembly on 18 February and is subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

The Committee formally considered the SR before the Assembly today at its meeting on 2 March, together with an accompanying report from the Assembly's Examiner of Statutory Rules, who, as the Minister has already said, had no observation to make about the technical scrutiny of the rule. The Committee therefore agreed to recommend that the order be affirmed by the Assembly.

I am aware that, since the Committee's consideration of the rule, NIPSA has written to MLAs expressing its concern about the impact of the rule. Whilst acknowledging the union's concerns on behalf of its members, I note that those concerns were not brought to the attention of the Committee in advance of the rule being formally considered. That being the case, as Chairperson of the Committee, I am unable to respond on the Committee's behalf in that regard. That is regrettable, since the Committee has always sought to engage with the relevant trade unions on issues under consideration that affect their members.

On behalf of the Finance and Personnel Committee, I support the motion.

Mr Lunn: Following on from the Chair's comments about NIPSA having been in touch with MLAs about this, as have other individual members of the community, a 0.1% revaluation does not sound that serious. In itself, perhaps it is not. However, I am thinking of pensions already in payment, which will, theoretically, be slightly reduced by this. We do not know, as we move forward, what the next CPI will show. It has highlighted a difference across the various public service schemes here. The teachers' scheme allows for a revaluation of, I think, CPI plus 1.6%. One of the other schemes — I cannot remember which one — allows for a revaluation of 1.5% plus CPI. That would make them 1.4% and 1.5% respectively; you would still have an increase in your pension. If this trend continues, NIPSA, the unions and others can be rightly slightly concerned about the situation where people will see their pension being reduced in payment.

I believe that I am right in saying that the Northern Ireland Civil Service scheme has a provision in it to ignore a negative trend in CPI; in other words, it will not apply that 0.1% revaluation to the scheme for pensions already in payment. I do not know what authority the Minister has in that regard. I think that he said that we mirror what the situation is across the water. If we have any discretion in the matter, I would like him to let us know his thoughts about the possibility of not applying the 0.1% or any other negative CPI reduction in the future to people's pensions that are already in payment.

Mr Storey: I will just make a few comments. I thank the Committee for its scrutiny of this on two separate occasions. As the Chair rightly said, since that took place, we have been in receipt of correspondence from NIPSA. It is right and proper that we have a record in the House of the issues raised. Obviously, we note the lateness of the correspondence that was received and which Members

are in possession of. I will try to deal with the main points in relation to that correspondence.

First, in regards to CPI versus RPI, the scope to use RPI has been raised. The 2014 Act does not prohibit the use of RPI in a prices revaluation order, but it requires the index used to be that which the Department considers to be appropriate. CPI is an established measure that has been used to track changes in prices for the indexation of public service pensions and most benefits since 2011.

When use of CPI has been challenged in the past, both the High Court and the Court of Appeal have ruled that it is appropriate for benefits and pensions uprating.

Negative growth is rare. However, RPI is not immune to its effects when it does occur. It has also historically experienced periods of negative year-on-year change, as was the case in 2009. It can be noted also that, at the policy development stage for the reformed pension schemes, the coalition Government's original scheme design proposal was for scheme revaluation with reference to earnings, which for 2015-16 provides +2%. Therefore, CPI-linked revaluation is a scheme design feature that, at that time, was favoured by employee representatives in return for faster pension accruals in the schemes. It is important that that is underscored.

The other issue that was raised in the correspondence is in regard to the scheme's sustainability. I share the concerns that have been expressed about the sustainability of our public service pension schemes. The point is that the provisions of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 already agreed by the Assembly, which include the revaluation provisions and can track both positive and negative growth, are purposely designed to increase that sustainability. That is an important line to underscore in this regard.

Although it appears that some workers with flat CPI will lose less than 50 pence from their accrued pension, in many cases, those public servants will have earned more pension in total this year due to the faster in-year accrual of those pension schemes. Those pension pots are still increasing. This order maintains their buying power in line with revaluation processes in scheme regulations and within the broader context of the requirement to manage future costs and ensure sustainability, which the 2014 Act is designed to address.

It is important, therefore, that devaluation is managed effectively from the outset. If negative growth were overlooked, scheme costs would rise and these additional costs would be loaded onto schemes and taxpayers. I think that this is the point that the Member was trying to get to in asking why we are doing this. It is important that devaluation is managed effectively. To disregard the reality of negative revaluation on even one occasion would set a precedent for an arbitrary approach to how benefits are revalued across the schemes. In the long term, that would pose much greater risks for scheme sustainability. We need to underscore that sustainability is an important issue for us all.

This question is asked: will the Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order 2016 have any impact on pensions in payment, and are those pensions being increased this year? The answer is no. The Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 will have no impact on the pensions in payment. Public service pensions in payment are indexed

annually under different legislation that requires them to be increased by the same percentage as the additional state earnings-related pension. Both the additional state earnings-related pension and the public service pensions in payment will also not be increased this year. I trust that that gives some clarity on both the question raised by my colleague and friend Mr Lunn and the correspondence from NIPSA.

It is important that the Assembly agrees today to make this Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order to ensure that active public service members' pension accruals can be revalued in line with the agreed principles of the 2014 Act and the processes set out in the regulations for each scheme. The position in the rest of the United Kingdom is exactly the same as it is in Northern Ireland.

7.00 pm

This is probably the last time that I will be before the House in this mandate. We look forward to the election campaign getting under way. I thank the Chair, the Committee and my staff in DFP. Even though I have been there for a very short time, I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to see how our public finances are managed. I thank Members for the courtesy that they have shown me during that time.

As we face an election campaign, we face challenges. That is the nature of the political process, whether it is here or any other jurisdiction. Those in the Republic of Ireland know all too well to their own cost the challenges that the political process can bring. However, in Northern Ireland, I am confident that we will continue to make progress. I look forward to the wishes of the electorate, whatever they are, being fulfilled and mandated in the new Assembly. I thank everyone for their help during my time as Minister of Finance and Personnel.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 were introduced in March 2015 following instruction by the Department of Finance and Personnel and Her Majesty's Treasury to amend the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993. Those regulations were affirmed without issue.

During the drafting of that legislation, the Department of Finance and Personnel instructed the removal of a clause relating to the protection of increases in guaranteed minimum pensions to happen after the abolition of contracting out, which had yet to be provided for in Northern Ireland legislation.

Schedule 13 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, introduced in June 2015, makes provision for the abolition of contracting out from 6 April 2016 by way of amendment to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993.

The changes in the draft statutory rule are technical and ensure the continued protection of increases in guaranteed minimum pension benefits for members who were contracted out of the second state earnings-related pension scheme between 6 April 1978 and 5 April 1997.

The draft regulations before us have been the subject of a targeted consultation. The consultation ran from 26 October last year to 23 November, and no comments were received. The regulations have been subject to an equality screening exercise, and no equality issues were identified.

On 10 February 2016, the Health Committee agreed that it was content with the draft regulations, and it is with its support that I bring these draft regulations. Subject to affirmative resolution, the regulations will become effective from 6 April. I commend the draft regulations to the House.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion.

The statutory rule, as was outlined, seeks to make consequential modifications to primary legislation to comply with the Treasury's requirement for the Department to introduce a further consequential modification to the Pension Schemes Act 1993 to ensure that the new 2015 Health and Social Care pension scheme operates as intended in terms of its interaction with the wider framework of pensions and tax legislation.

As the Minister pointed out, the Committee considered the proposal for the statutory rule on 3 February 2016, and we approved the subsequent rule on 10 February 2016. No issues were raised by the Committee.

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Chair and, indeed, the Committee for their constructive and positive comments and for the scrutiny that they gave the regulations.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has instructed that the relevant primary legislation be amended to give effect to the required change via statutory rules, to be taken forward by each of the responsible authorities for the main pension schemes in Northern Ireland. As responsible authority for the HSC pension scheme, I am complying with that instruction. These consequential amendments will provide protection to members of the HSC pension scheme after the abolition of contracting-out on 6 April. I ask Members to support the motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): As we do not currently have quorum, I ask — We now have quorum.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Subject to Assembly approval, these regulations will outline the amount of fixed penalties to be applied for a number of tobacco-related offences, as set out in section 12 of the Tobacco Retailers Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. The aim of the Tobacco Retailers Act is to reduce smoking uptake by children and young people by making it more difficult for them to access tobacco products. The Act had a positive response from, and a smooth passage through, the Assembly, receiving Royal Assent on 25 March 2014.

In summary, the Act requires all retailers of tobacco products to register; provides that retailers can be banned from selling tobacco for up to three years if they have committed three relevant offences in a five-year period; allows for an offence of proxy purchasing to be introduced; increases the maximum fine on summary conviction for underage sales to £5,000; and provides for the introduction of fixed penalty notices for a number of tobacco-related offences.

Three sets of regulations are required to enable the effective implementation of the Tobacco Retailers Act. The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations, which we are debating today, are the only set that requires the endorsement of the Assembly before they can be made.

Previously, the only tobacco-related offences that could be discharged by paying a fixed penalty notice were those relating to smoke-free legislation. The Tobacco Retailers Act allows for an authorised officer of a district council to issue a fixed penalty notice for a number of additional tobacco-related offences. The offences do not include those created in this Act but extend to those established in earlier legislation, such as selling tobacco to under-18s, either by retail or by vending machine.

The regulations for which I seek Members' endorsement outline the amounts of those fixed penalties. The advantages of introducing fixed penalty notices are twofold. In the first instance, they provide authorised officers with an additional enforcement tool. Secondly, they reduce the burden on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service by reducing the number of prosecutions. It therefore follows that the amount of the fixed penalty notices applied must be at a level sufficient to deter people from committing the offence but not so high as to encourage offenders to aim for a more favourable outcome from a court hearing.

With a few exceptions, fixed penalty notices have been set at one tenth of the maximum fine that could be applied for the offence on summary conviction. The first exception relates to underage sales of tobacco from retail outlets. From 6 April the maximum fine for that offence will be £5,000. The fixed penalty notice, however, has been set at £250. That is to take into account cases where tobacco has been sold to a child by a sales assistant, despite the owner or manager of the business having taken all reasonable steps to prevent such an occurrence.

A fine of £250 is a significant sum for an employee to pay. Where enforcement officers feel that a stronger penalty

is suitable, they will retain the option of prosecuting the offender, who would then be liable for a fine of up to £5,000. Similarly, the maximum fine for proxy purchasing is £5,000, but we are proposing a fixed penalty of £250 for this offence. For the offence of selling cigarettes other than in their original pre-packaged state, and by that I mean retailers selling singles, we have taken the decision to apply a fixed penalty notice of £250, despite the maximum fine being only £1,000.

Singles are generally sold to those who cannot afford to buy a full packet of cigarettes, and those people are normally children. Therefore, retailers taking the decision to sell cigarettes in that way would be doing so knowing that the vast majority of those customers would not be of the legal age to purchase tobacco. A higher fixed penalty is being applied in the order to deter that practice.

A consultation was carried out on the draft regulations between July and September last year, and the majority of respondents agreed with the amounts proposed. Furthermore, at its meeting on 27 January, the Health Committee agreed that it was content for my Department to make the proposed regulations, and it is with its support that I am bringing these draft regulations before us today. Subject to affirmative resolution, the regulations will come into effect on 1 July. I therefore commend the draft regulations to the House.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion.

As outlined, the primary objective of the Tobacco Retailers Act is to prevent young people from taking up smoking by making it more difficult for those under the age of 18 to access tobacco products. The Act is intended to assist authorised officers of councils in carrying out their duties on tobacco control by providing them with a complete register of tobacco retailers. The statutory rule prescribes the amount of fixed penalties for certain tobacco-related offences under the Act. The Committee considered the proposal for this statutory rule on 27 January 2016, and we approved the subsequent rule on 2 March 2016. Again, no issues were raised by the Committee.

Mr Hamilton: Again, I thank the Chair of the Committee and, indeed, the Committee as a whole for its scrutiny of the legislation.

Preventing young people from taking up tobacco is the single most effective way we can reduce smoking prevalence in the long term. The results of the young persons behaviour and attitudes survey 2013 show that we are making some progress on that, with smoking amongst 11- to 16-year-olds down to 5% from 8% in 2010. It is important that we continue to build on that success, and I believe that the implementation of measures in the Tobacco Retailers Act, including the introduction of fixed penalty notices, will assist in achieving that. I therefore commend the draft regulations to the Assembly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The regulations were introduced in April 2015 following instruction by the Department of Finance and Personnel, further to that by Her Majesty's Treasury, to amend the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993. Those regulations were affirmed without any issue.

However, during the drafting of that legislation, the Department of Finance and Personnel issued an instruction for the removal of a clause relating to the protection of increases in guaranteed minimum pensions after the abolition of contracting out, which, as I mentioned, had not yet been provided for in Northern Ireland legislation. Schedule 13 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, which was introduced in June 2015, now makes provision for the abolition of contracting out from 6 April this year by way of amendment to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993.

The changes in the draft statutory rule are technical and ensure the continued protection of increases in guaranteed minimum pension benefits for members who were contracted out of the second state earnings related pension scheme. The draft regulations have been the subject of a targeted consultation that ran from 30 November to 18 December. There were no objections to the changes, as they are beneficial to members and the impact is similar to all other pension schemes that have contracted out, for example the Civil Service pension scheme and the teachers' pension scheme.

The regulations have been subject to an equality screening exercise, and no equality issues were identified. The Health Committee agreed on 10 February that it was content with the draft regulations, and it is with its support that I bring these regulations before the House. If passed today, they will become effective from 6 April. I commend the draft regulations to the House.

7.15 pm

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion. As the Minister outlined, the statutory rule seeks to make consequential amendments to the primary legislation, resulting from the abolition of contracting-out from 6 April 2016. The proposed amendments are minor and technical in nature. The Committee considered the proposal for the statutory rule on 27 January 2016 and approved the subsequent rule on 10 February. There were no issues raised by the Committee.

Mr Hamilton: I again thank the Chair of the Committee. As I mentioned previously, the Department of Finance and Personnel has instructed that the relevant primary legislation be amended to give effect to the required

change via a statutory rule taken forward by each of the responsible authorities for the main pension schemes in Northern Ireland. As the responsible authority for the firefighters' pension scheme, I am complying with that instruction. The consequential amendments will provide protection to members of the firefighters' pension scheme after the abolition of contracting-out on 6 April. I ask Members to support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Committee Business

Standing Orders: Amendments

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The next eight motions relate to amendments to Standing Orders, so I propose to group them as detailed in the Order Paper and conduct a single debate.

The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer will have 15 minutes in which to propose the lead motion and 10 minutes in which to wind. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

When all who wish to speak have done so, I will put the Question on the motion relating to Standing Order 10(1). I will then ask the Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures to move formally the motions relating to Standing Order 20A; Standing Order 44(2); Standing Order 44A(1); new Standing Order 45A; Standing Order 58(1); Standing Order 69; and Standing Order 81. I will then put the Question on each of those motions without further debate.

I remind the House that cross-community support will be required for each. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

Mr Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. It will not have escaped your notice that we are inquorate.

Notice taken that 10 Members were not present.

House counted, and, there being fewer than 10 Members present, the Deputy Speaker ordered the Division Bells to be rung.

Upon 10 Members being present —

Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I beg to move

In Standing Order 10(1) leave out sub-paragraphs (a) to (i) and insert

- (a) Assembly Business;*
- (b) Executive Committee Business;*
- (c) Committee Business;*
- (d) Questions;*
- (e) Opposition Business;*
- (f) Private Members' Business;*
- (g) Private Business;*
- (h) Adjournment Debates;*
- (i) Party Business; and*
- (j) Matters of the Day."*

The following motions stood in the Order Paper:

Leave out Standing Order 20A and insert

"20A. Topical Questions

(1) Topical questions for a Minister shall be taken during the last 15 minutes of the time allocated for questions for oral answer by that Minister.

(2) No topical questions shall be asked of the Assembly Commission.

(3) A member who wishes to ask a topical question of a Minister at a particular sitting shall submit his or her name in advance to the Speaker.

(4) The Speaker shall allow up to 10 members to ask a topical question.

(5) Except where paragraphs 6-8 apply, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which members may ask a topical question.

(6) Where—

(a) there is an official opposition; and

(b) at least one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3),

the first topical question must be asked by a member of the official opposition.

(7) Where more than one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3), the Speaker shall determine by which member of the official opposition the first topical question is to be asked.

(8) Where the first topical question is to be asked by a member of the official opposition, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which subsequent questions are taken.

(9) The first topical question may not be from a member of the same party as the Minister to whom it is addressed, unless all the topical questions are from members of that party.

(10) The Speaker shall inform –

(a) members; and

(b) the Ministers to whom the questions will be addressed at the sitting;

in advance, of the names and order in which questions are to be taken.

(11) Answers may not be debated, but the member asking the question may ask a supplementary question. A supplementary question may contain no more than one enquiry.

(12) Where a member is not present to ask a topical question, the Speaker shall move to the next member in accordance with the order determined under paragraph (5).

(13) Paragraphs (1)(a) and (2) of Standing Order 19 and paragraphs (2), (8A), (10) and (11) of Standing Order 20 shall apply to topical questions as they apply to questions for oral answer.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Leave out Standing Order 44(2) and insert

“(2) Where section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, Ministerial offices must be filled by applying the procedures set out in section 18(2) to (6) within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which -

(a) the determination mentioned in section 18(1)(b) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in section 18(1)(c) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in section 18(1)(d) is given; or

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in section 18(1)(da) comes to an end.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Leave out Standing Order 44A(1) and insert

“(1) Where paragraph 3D(1) and (2)(a) of Schedule 4A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, the office of Minister of Justice must be filled by applying the procedures set out in paragraph 3D(4) to (8) in Part 1A of Schedule 4A within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which –

(a) the determination mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(a) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(b) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(c) is given;

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(d) comes to an end as so mentioned; or

(e) the Minister of Justice ceases to hold office as mentioned in paragraph 3D(14), otherwise than by virtue of an Assembly election.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

After Standing Order 45 insert

“45A. The Official Opposition

(1) Subject to paragraph (2), where a party is entitled to nominate a person to hold Ministerial office under section 18 (2) to (6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and declines to do so, that party may choose to be recognised as part of the official opposition.

(2) A party is not to be recognised as part of the official opposition if any member of that party holds a Ministerial office, or held a Ministerial office and ceased to hold that office otherwise than at a time when all Northern Ireland Ministers ceased to hold office.

(3) Where only one party chooses to be recognised in accordance with paragraph (1) that party is to be regarded as the official opposition.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Leave out Standing Order 58(1) and insert

“(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Audit Committee to exercise the functions mentioned in section 66(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and sub-paragraphs 18(2) to (4) of Schedule 1 to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. In accordance with section 66(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, no more than one member of the committee shall at the same time be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Leave out Standing Order 69 and insert

“69. Members’ Interests

(1) There is to be a register of interests of members of the Assembly (‘the Register of Interests’).

(2) The Register of Interests must set out the registrable interests of members.

(3) The Clerk of Standards—

(a) must compile, and may from time to time revise, the Register of Interests; and

(b) must publish, and make available for public inspection, the Register of Interests.

(4) A member must—

(a) within 28 days of taking his or her seat, inform the Clerk of Standards of his or her registrable interests; and

(b) within 28 days of any change to those registrable interests, inform the Clerk of Standards of that change.

(5) A member who has

(a) a financial interest in any matter; or

(b) a relevant interest in any matter,

must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.

(6) A member must not, in consideration of any payment or benefit in kind specified in Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Rules, advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any person in any proceedings of the Assembly, or urge any other member to do so.

(7) In this order –

“financial interest” means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules, other than an interest specified in category 8 or category 9 of Chapter 1;

“registrable interest” means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules;

“relevant interest” means an interest to which Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules applies.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

In Standing Order 81, leave out “Code of Conduct” means any code of conduct for members together with any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly;

“day” means calendar day;’

and insert –

“‘Code of Conduct’ means any code of conduct for members and the Guide to the Rules agreed to by the Assembly;

‘day’ means calendar day;

‘Guide to the Rules’ means any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly.” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The House will already be familiar with the Committee on Procedures’s approach of bringing forward amendments to Standing Orders together to simplify the disposal of business. Today is such an instance. Although there are eight amendments to Standing Orders, they relate to three different areas of business, which are the Fresh Start Agreement, the code of conduct and the new Public Services Ombudsman Act 2016.

I think that the Standing Orders relating to the Fresh Start Agreement will attract most attention, so I will start with them.

This group includes five Standing Orders on today’s Order Paper. Three of them put provisions in place for an opposition and I would like to talk about those first. They came to the Committee from the Speaker. It is a slightly

unusual approach, but the Speaker was given a clear mandate to do this by agreement of the Assembly on 8 February. In his letter, the Speaker advised the Committee that most of the provisions for an opposition required under the Fresh Start Agreement would be implemented administratively. However, there were three changes to Standing Orders envisaged and draft proposals were included. The Committee examined the Standing Orders in light of the agreement itself and against specific aspects of the opposition Bill which passed its Final Stage in the Assembly on 29 February.

The first amendment and the one which generated most discussion was the new Standing Order 45A. This introduces a provision and context for an official opposition. It also sets out how and when such an opposition will be formed. The Committee was clear that the draft amendment proposed by the Speaker in no way precluded changes being brought forward to action the Bill in the new mandate. It was also clear that it was within the Committee’s remit to introduce changes in advance of the Bill receiving Royal Assent if it saw fit. The Committee examined the new draft Standing Order with specific focus on the provisions of clauses 2 and 3 of the Bill. These relate to setting up an opposition in the new mandate, which would be done before Committees are formed. The clauses extend the definition of a qualifying party further than the Fresh Start Agreement does. They provide for a party whose members comprise 8% or more of the total number of Members of the Assembly to form an opposition or part of an opposition. This is in addition to those who are entitled to, but who decline, a ministerial post. There was a lot of discussion around this. However, even though the Committee recognised the potential to include this provision, the time left to make the amendments to Standing Orders was instrumental in its decision not to include it at this time.

The Committee recognised that although the Bill had passed its Final Stage, indicating the Assembly’s support for it, this had been done on a simple majority basis. Standing Orders, on the other hand, require cross-community support. The Committee was not convinced that cross-community support has been demonstrated in respect of the opposition Bill but was content that it had been demonstrated in respect of the agreement. The Standing Orders were scheduled for consideration in the last week of the mandate and while not passing them would normally be a simple matter of revisiting and reworking them before bringing them back to the Assembly, at this stage in the mandate it posed a risk, since failure to do so would leave the Assembly with no provision in Standing Orders to form an official opposition at the start of the new mandate. For these reasons, it was ultimately agreed to bring forward the new Standing Order 45A, based solely on the provisions of the Fresh Start Agreement.

This was by far the most contentious of the amendments that we see before us today. There was discussion around the order of items in the list of business included in Standing Order 10(1), but this was very low key and centred around the Committee’s wish to ensure the new category “Opposition Business” is given due recognition by its position in the list. Two options of where to insert the heading “Opposition Business” were considered: one above, and one below “Committee Business”. The Committee confirmed that there was no legal reason for the order of the list and it confirmed that the order of the

list had no impact on the passage of business through the Assembly. Having reassured itself on both of these points, the Committee agreed to bring forward the version of Standing Order 10(1) that is before us today.

The only other amendment relating to the provision for an opposition is Standing Order 20A. This puts a facility in place to allow the first topical question to be put from a member of the opposition. There was no issue around the construction of this Standing Order and the Committee was content to bring it to the Assembly in its original form.

I will now move to the second group of Fresh Start amendments. As I said earlier, they relate to provisions in the agreement that do not relate to the opposition. The amendments are extremely simple. However, the reason for them and their effect is a bit more convoluted. The need for the amendments arises out of the unusual combination of circumstances taking effect at one time and at the start of the new mandate. What are they? Obviously, we will be establishing the formal structures of the new Assembly following the election, but we also need to facilitate a reduction in the number of Departments and their Ministers. In addition to both of these requirements, we will have changes that come about because of the Fresh Start Agreement.

They require that time is made available for an opposition to be established and a Programme for Government agreed before ministerial posts are filled. They also introduce a requirement for Ministers to give an undertaking before taking their seats. Many of the changes can be brought about only by changes to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and they have been made by Westminster legislation that has recently completed its passage.

A key effect of the changes in respect of Standing Orders is that they allow two different time limits before d'Hondt must be run to appoint Ministers. In the case of the formation of the opposition and Programme for Government, it now allows 14 days, but, following the presentation of the determination to change the number of Departments and ministerial posts, it allows seven days. Clearly, when the two sets of circumstances occur at the same time, one must take precedence over the other. The revisions brought about by the Westminster legislation correct that, but Standing Orders, as crafted, do not make it clear. It is in order to avoid ambiguity that the amendments before us are being proposed. As I said, while the background is somewhat convoluted, the solution can be achieved very simply by inserting:

"Where section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act applies"

in Standing Order 44(2).

The second amendment has the same effect but in relation to the Minister of Justice. As the appointment of that ministerial post is set out in a different part of the Act and in a different Standing Order, a separate amendment is required.

The Committee has taken legal advice and been given assurance that the amendments that I have outlined are necessary and fit for purpose. On that basis, I am content to commend them to the House.

Members will be relieved to hear that the last two groups of amendments are far less convoluted. The first offers an amendment to Standing Order 58(1). It is needed to reflect the provisions of the new Public Services Ombudsman

Act 2016, which sets out the additional role of the Audit Committee. That has been reflected by including a reference to the relevant parts of the Act in Standing Order 58(1). I can confirm that the Audit Committee has seen and is content with the proposed amendment.

The last amendment relates to a new Standing Order 69 and a consequential amendment to Standing Order 81. They reflect the provisions and requirements of the Assembly's new code of conduct. I can confirm that the Committee on Standards and Privileges has seen and is content with the proposed amendments. I will not go into a lot of detail about the provisions of the amendments, but I will outline how they affect the Standing Orders. The new Standing Order 69 details requirements in respect of the registration of Members' interests. It also points to where definitions of the interests that Members must register can be found in the new code. The amendment proposed to Standing Order 81 simply clarifies the term "Guide to the Rules".

I will leave my remarks there, a LeasCheann Comhairle, but, before closing, I thank the Committee staff for all of the work that they have done to facilitate the Committee in bringing the amendments to the Assembly before the end of the mandate. It has involved increasingly frequent meetings and brought added pressure in turning round business, but it has all been done seamlessly and professionally. Since this is the last time that I will stand up as Chair of the Procedures Committee, I thank the Committee staff for all of their work during the mandate. I also thank the members of the Committee for their courtesy and cooperation throughout all of that.

In closing, I will simply say that the Committee has given a great deal of consideration to each of the amendments and is content that each amendment accurately reflects the provisions in the source documents that it seeks to interpret. Therefore, on behalf of the Committee on Procedures, I commend the motions to the House.

Bear with me a moment before I sit: speaking for myself and on behalf of Sinn Féin, we will support the changes to the Standing Orders that I have just outlined.

7.30 pm

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Chair for his speech outlining the details of the proposed amendments to Standing Orders. He skilfully avoided the convolutions contained in the amendments to Standing Order 44(2) and, possibly, Standing Order 44A(1), but I am grateful to him for outlining the proposed changes. As a party, we would support all the changes save for what is proposed as Standing Order 45A.

Very briefly, I will outline why we have reservations in relation to Standing Order 45A. It is really that it encompasses the Fresh Start Agreement. That agreement was of course an agreement between two parties, not a multi-party agreement. That should be emphasised, although I have to say that contained therein were elements with which my party would be in agreement. Leaving that aside, with regard to the Fresh Start Agreement in relation to the creation of an official opposition or at least a vehicle by which an official opposition could in fact be expressed within Standing Orders and in the Assembly, it is our view that the present draft of Standing Order 45A falls short of what is also contained in the John McCallister Bill, which, as yet, has not received Royal Assent but has been passed by the House. In essence, the McCallister Bill contains a

provision whereby members of a party that comprises 8% or more of the total number of Members of the Assembly could be recognised as part of the official opposition.

That is the will of the House. I know that at least one party opposed that; nonetheless, it is the will of the House. It is not yet an Act of the House in the fullest sense of the word, because it has not received Royal Assent, but, as we all know, that is a formality. That will take place in due course and possibly very quickly, possibly before the next election.

What we and other parties in the Committee on Procedures would say is that it would be right and proper for the House to recognise the McCallister Bill now and put that 8% element into Standing Orders. Of course, we know that it is relatively easy to express that in Standing Orders; indeed, we had a draft proposal before the Committee on Procedures, and it could, in fact, have been quite easily adopted by that Committee. We say that there is no reason why, in fact, that should not be part of Standing Orders now. It seems a little ridiculous for the House to adopt a Standing Order based on Fresh Start now, with all its limitations and, in the aftermath of the election, change Standing Orders again to reflect the provisions of the John McCallister Bill.

It seems to me that the preference is for this draft not to be accepted and that another draft be substituted. Now, at this late stage, the problem is that we have a position where the Committee, principally Sinn Féin and the DUP —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Would the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr A Maginness: Am I time-limited?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): You have five minutes.

Mr A Maginness: I was not aware of that. I conclude and simply say that it is unfortunate and, I believe, not right that Standing Order 45A as drafted should be adopted by the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member's time is up.

Mr Kennedy: I am conscious that there is but one sleep until the final plenary sitting of this mandate. It is exciting, isn't it? In respect of the motions to amend Standing Orders, the Ulster Unionist Party has long supported the concept of an official opposition. After years of arguing and lobbying for that, with seemingly little success, we now have two proposals on the table: the changes to Standing Orders stemming from a combination of the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, and John McCallister's private Member's Bill.

We should always seek to improve these institutions and make sure that they are fit for purpose and fit to serve our society. It is clear that the public want an official opposition in place to allow them the basic democratic right of being able to vote a party into government and reject them should they become dissatisfied. I am not sure that these amendments create all those conditions, but at least it is clear that some changes are being made, which can be welcomed.

The Ulster Unionist Party has also been clear that it is our preference that the official opposition structures would be better enshrined in primary legislation to secure them for the future. It is unfortunate that that is not the case, and it is being done instead through Standing Orders. It is vital that the rights of the opposition are protected into the future, and setting out entitlements in legislation would have been the better way to do that.

I hope that the perception of Stormont can be improved as a result of what is being put in place this evening. This place is often characterised by lack of delivery and stalemate, but I hope that the message coming out that parties will be able to take up position in official opposition will not just revitalise the Assembly but, potentially, start to turn the tide of public apathy.

We now have two packages of measures. I am not sure whether any party in the House would have chosen them in the manner in which they have come, but, nevertheless, it is important to recognise that some progress has been made.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I call Barry McElduff.

Mr McElduff: I did not anticipate being on the list.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I call Jim Allister.

Mr Allister: I will take you up on that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I wish to address draft Standing Order 45A, which is wholly deficient, in that it closes its eyes to the fact that, whatever 'Fresh Start' said, it never obtained and does not have legislative authority, but John McCallister's Bill does. It is the reflective desire of the House, and, by the time the House comes back, it will be, in every form, the law of the land. Yet this Standing Order denies that reality for no logical reason but for the obvious political reason of wishing to stymie the provision in John McCallister's Bill, which would enable a party with 8% support to claim the rights of an opposition. That will be the law of the land by the time we come back, and yet, by the will of the House tonight, courtesy of the agreement between Sinn Féin and the DUP, it will not be provided for in Standing Orders, with the veiled threat that it may never be provided for in Standing Orders, judging from what the Chairman said when he pointed out that Standing Orders require cross-community support. If the Chairman was suggesting that his party will ensure that Standing Orders to implement John McCallister's Bill are not to be permitted —

Mr G Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr G Kelly: I will answer your question. That is not the intent. The Standing Order will come through in the new mandate. This is a mechanism to get this through on the basis of John McCallister's opposition Bill coming through. There is no intent in the way that the Member says.

Mr Allister: If there is no intent, it could have gone through tonight. If no one is saying that they will block a Standing Order that reflects the content of John McCallister's Bill, why is it not before us tonight? It was suggested to us in the Procedures Committee that it is not before us tonight because it would not obtain cross-community support. So, who was going to block it? Once it becomes the law of the land, if the Assembly does seek to block a Standing Order to implement it, and if there is a party in the position of having 8%, the Assembly will find itself in the High Court, where the matter will be resolved. The law of the land says that a party in that position has the entitlement to the status of opposition, but if the Assembly fails to implement Standing Orders to that effect, it will be in breach of the law of the land, and someone else will have to tell it that and ensure that it comes into line.

I really do not understand why it would have been blocked tonight if, on foot of what the Chairman said, there will be no blocking of a Standing Order of that nature. Unless it

is the Deputy Chairman's party that will block it. When the matter first arose, the Deputy Chairman was supportive of embracing Mr McCallister's Bill in the Standing Order but, by the next meeting, had changed his mind.

Who thinks that it is inappropriate to have a Standing Order that reflects what will be the law of the land based on John McCallister's Bill? If no one thinks that, why are we not doing it tonight? Why are we not coming back to a new Assembly with Standing Orders in place that reflect the law of the land? I have heard no answer, and it really does beg the question why some people think it appropriate to stall on the issue. The House should consider tonight why it is doing this and why it thinks it necessary to put up an obstacle to something that it could do tonight but chose not to do. Choosing not to do it suggests that it is not minded to allow John McCallister's Bill the full rein that —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Allister: — has been given to it and will be given to it by Royal Assent. For those reasons, I think that that draft Standing Order is flawed and deficient.

Mr McCallister: Several things about the debate surprised me slightly. I find it slightly strange that Sinn Féin is setting so much stay in getting Royal Assent. I suppose that we should be encouraged that it deems the Queen's signature as important as that. I am led to believe that the Bill will probably get Royal Assent sometime next week. We are that close to getting Royal Assent and to the Bill officially becoming an Act of the Assembly, so it seems strange that we are not making those provisions. Throughout my engagement with members of Sinn Féin during the debate, their argument against the Bill was that we could do it all by Standing Orders anyway. I would like something to give me, and colleagues, confidence, and, given that we are not doing this, I am maybe not seeing that tonight.

Look at the history of the debate on opposition; it has been much talked about for many years.

The Stormont House Agreement at the end of 2014 promised changes to Standing Orders by March 2015. My Bill was being drafted and worked on throughout that time and I certainly think that, by the time it came round to Stormont House II or Fresh Start, the Bill had an impact on progressing some issues.

7.45 pm

We seem to be making these changes mainly so that the Assembly can say to the public, "Well, we agreed this in Fresh Start in November, and here is March 2016, and we have delivered on it". So, we are technically going to change Standing Orders for one sitting day of this mandate. Whoever is returned here after 5 May will have to deal with that.

I hope that what was said in the intervention between Mr Kelly and Mr Allister is right and that the Chair and Deputy Chair in their reply give reassurance not only to me but to the House that this is not some type of blocking mechanism or that the Assembly and Standing Orders are at variance with the Bill. The 8% threshold was bought into by many parties. It was approved, it is the collective will of the Assembly, was passed and is about to be signed into law by Her Majesty The Queen.

I would not like to think that anyone would try to block primary legislation. It comes back to why I was so passionate about continuing to push the private Member's Bill on reforming the Assembly, because I knew that that was a key way of making sure that these things actually happen.

It would have been better had the Committee on Procedures looked at drafting Standing Orders very much in line with the Bill and in anticipation of it. I hope that the Committee works on that and has something very much ready for a new Committee on Procedures so that those changes in line with the Bill, if it receives Royal Assent next week, can be quickly worked on and put in place.

This is a missed opportunity. It is slightly pointless that we are changing Standing Orders for one day. It would appear that it is very much for the optics but I hope there is reassurance from the Chair or Deputy Chair that, when Royal Assent is given, Standing Orders will be amended to reflect the Bill in its entirety.

Mr Clarke (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I welcome the opportunity to conclude today's debate on the motions to amend Standing Orders. I thank the Committee Chairperson for opening the debate and all Members who contributed.

Proposed new Standing Order 45A will make provision for an official opposition. As we heard, there are differing views on how we arrived at that point. The Chairperson explained very clearly the rationale for the Committee's decision, highlighting the significant risks if the opposition Bill aspects were included. I reiterate that the amendment to Standing Orders does not preclude changes from being brought forward to implement the provisions of the Bill in the new mandate, and we fully expect that the next Committee on Procedures — whoever that may be — will examine the full impact of the Bill as a matter of priority at the start of the next mandate. In fact, that issue is highlighted in the Committee's legacy report.

With regard to the other amendments relating to the Fresh Start Agreement, the Chairperson clearly explained the reasons for them, so I do not propose to comment any further on those. The amendments relating to Standing Orders 69 and 81 are straightforward and will bring Standing Orders into line with the Assembly's new code of conduct.

Members will be aware that, when amendments to Standing Orders are agreed in plenary, they become effective immediately. The updated version of Standing Orders is published on the Assembly website immediately, and, a couple of weeks later, Members will receive the revised printed inserts for inserting into their copy of Standing Orders. With Easter recess and dissolution almost upon us — as some Members indicated, tomorrow is the last sitting — it is proposed that the revised printed inserts be sent to Members at the start of the new mandate, while Members who are new to the Assembly will receive a complete set of Standing Orders.

I will summarise where some of the Members were tonight, starting with Mr Maginness. The biggest contention in all of these changes was the proposal to insert new Standing Order 45A. There was a theme between him, Danny Kennedy, Jim Allister and John McCallister. I will take Jim's contribution first. Jim made a point — and I did change my opinion on this, and I did so because I listened to some of the officials who actually understand the process. It was clear to me that, whilst some of these four gentlemen want

to see opposition, there was an opportunity that could have been missed in this mandate. If there had been a reason to block — Jim is nodding his head —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Clarke: I am not giving way because I have listened enough to you, Jim.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order.

Mr Clarke: You have talked nonsense. You come in and continue to talk nonsense. The reality is that a cross-community vote is required to get this Standing Order through.

Mr Allister: Who was going to block it?

Mr Clarke: When it was debated, I voted in support of John McCallister's Bill. All of our party went through John's Lobby at that time and voted for all aspects of it. Jim is asking who was going to block it. It certainly was not anyone on these Benches, but the reality is that there was a possibility that that could have happened. Who in this Chamber does not want opposition? Is Jim Allister sitting here tonight and saying that he does not want opposition? Does he want to miss this opportunity at the start of the next mandate, where we would have an official opposition? The answer is no. None of the rest of us want to do that, but Jim has wanted official opposition since he started and now —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order. I ask that all remarks be made through the Chair and that no pointing at Members occurs. Continue.

Mr Clarke: As I said, Jim was supposed to be the champion of opposition since he started. I am quite happy to repeat that. It took John McCallister, and I thank John McCallister for the work that he has done. John McCallister has a Bill, which this party supported and was pleased to support. There was a danger that, if we could not get the revision of Standing Orders, we could go into a new mandate without an official opposition. We are in the position where, at the start of the mandate, we will have it.

It has already been said by the Chairperson of the Committee that there is an opportunity in the next mandate. It will be the first piece of business for whoever takes that Committee to look at the Standing Orders in relation to John McCallister's Bill. When John was summing up today, he said that he hopes to get Royal Assent next week. I think that anyone who is listening to this today will say that, if we go ahead and do something before the Bill gets its Royal Assent, we could look foolish. We have heard an indication from the party opposite that it was not using a blocking mechanism. I can only take it at its word and that this will be dealt at the start of the next mandate. Not everyone signed up to the Fresh Start Agreement of course, but we signed up to the Fresh Start Agreement, which allows for official opposition. This mechanism, adjusting the Standing Orders, allows that to go ahead. For that reason, we will be supporting the motions on the amendments.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that all eight motions require cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

In Standing Order 10(1) leave out sub-paragraphs (a) to (i) and insert

- “(a) Assembly Business;*
- (b) Executive Committee Business;*
- (c) Committee Business;*
- (d) Questions;*
- (e) Opposition Business;*
- (f) Private Members' Business;*
- (g) Private Business;*
- (h) Adjournment Debates;*
- (i) Party Business; and*
- (j) Matters of the Day.”*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The remaining motions in the group will now be moved in turn and voted on without further debate.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

Leave out Standing Order 20A and insert

“20A. Topical Questions

(1) Topical questions for a Minister shall be taken during the last 15 minutes of the time allocated for questions for oral answer by that Minister.

(2) No topical questions shall be asked of the Assembly Commission.

(3) A member who wishes to ask a topical question of a Minister at a particular sitting shall submit his or her name in advance to the Speaker.

(4) The Speaker shall allow up to 10 members to ask a topical question.

(5) Except where paragraphs 6-8 apply, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which members may ask a topical question.

(6) Where—

(a) there is an official opposition; and

(b) at least one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3),

the first topical question must be asked by a member of the official opposition.

(7) Where more than one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3), the Speaker shall determine by which member of the official opposition the first topical question is to be asked.

(8) Where the first topical question is to be asked by a member of the official opposition, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which subsequent questions are taken.

(9) The first topical question may not be from a member of the same party as the Minister to whom it is addressed, unless all the topical questions are from members of that party.

(10) The Speaker shall inform —

(a) members; and

(b) the Ministers to whom the questions will be addressed at the sitting;

in advance, of the names and order in which questions are to be taken.

(11) Answers may not be debated, but the member asking the question may ask a supplementary question. A supplementary question may contain no more than one enquiry.

(12) Where a member is not present to ask a topical question, the Speaker shall move to the next member in accordance with the order determined under paragraph (5).

(13) Paragraphs (1)(a) and (2) of Standing Order 19 and paragraphs (2), (8A), (10) and (11) of Standing Order 20 shall apply to topical questions as they apply to questions for oral answer." — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): We will now move on to the next motion in the group.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

Leave out Standing Order 44(2) and insert

"(2) Where section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, Ministerial offices must be filled by applying the procedures set out in section 18(2) to (6) within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which -

(a) the determination mentioned in section 18(1)(b) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in section 18(1)(c) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in section 18(1)(d) is given; or

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in section 18(1)(da) comes to an end." — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): We now move on to the next motion in the group.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

Leave out Standing Order 44A(1) and insert

"(1) Where paragraph 3D(1) and (2)(a) of Schedule 4A of the Northern Ireland Act

1998 applies, the office of Minister of Justice must be filled by applying the

procedures set out in paragraph 3D(4) to (8) in Part 1A of Schedule 4A within

a period of seven days beginning with the day on which -

(a) the determination mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(a) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(b) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(c) is given;

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(d) comes to an end

as so mentioned; or

(e) the Minister of Justice ceases to hold office as mentioned in paragraph

3D(14), otherwise than by virtue of an Assembly election." — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): We will now move on to the next motion in the group, on new Standing Order 45A.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 39; Noes 16.

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Mr Flanagan, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist:

Mr Anderson, Ms P Bradley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Lyons, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McElduff and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Nationalist

Mr Dallat, Mrs D Kelly, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr A Maginness, Mr Rogers.

Unionist:

Mr Allister, Mr Gardiner, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mr Patterson, Mr Swann.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr A Maginness and Mrs McKeivitt.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>[70.9%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>[79.2%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>[76.9%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>[0.0%]</i>

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

After Standing Order 45 insert

"45A. The Official Opposition

(1) Subject to paragraph (2), where a party is entitled to nominate a person to hold Ministerial office under section 18 (2) to (6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and declines to do so, that party may choose to be recognised as part of the official opposition.

(2) A party is not to be recognised as part of the official opposition if any member of that party holds a Ministerial office, or held a Ministerial office and ceased to hold that office otherwise than at a time when all Northern Ireland Ministers ceased to hold office.

(3) *Where only one party chooses to be recognised in accordance with paragraph (1) that party is to be regarded as the official opposition.*”

Resolved (with cross-community support):

Leave out Standing Order 58(1) and insert

“(1) *There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Audit Committee to exercise the functions mentioned in section 66(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and subparagraphs 18(2) to (4) of Schedule 1 to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. In accordance with section 66(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, no more than one member of the committee shall at the same time be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.*” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

Leave out Standing Order 69 and insert

“69. *Members’ Interests*

(1) *There is to be a register of interests of members of the Assembly (‘the Register of Interests’).*

(2) *The Register of Interests must set out the registrable interests of members.*

(3) *The Clerk of Standards—*

(a) *must compile, and may from time to time revise, the Register of Interests; and*

(b) *must publish, and make available for public inspection, the Register of Interests.*

(4) *A member must—*

(a) *within 28 days of taking his or her seat, inform the Clerk of Standards of his or her registrable interests; and*

(b) *within 28 days of any change to those registrable interests, inform the Clerk of Standards of that change.*

(5) *A member who has*

(a) *a financial interest in any matter; or*

(b) *a relevant interest in any matter,*

must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.

(6) *A member must not, in consideration of any payment or benefit in kind specified in Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Rules, advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any person in any proceedings of the Assembly, or urge any other member to do so.*

(7) *In this order –*

“*financial interest*” *means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules, other than an interest specified in category 8 or category 9 of Chapter 1;*

“*registrable interest*” *means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules;*

“*relevant interest*” *means an interest to which Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules applies.*” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Resolved (with cross-community support):

In Standing Order 81, leave out “Code of Conduct” means any code of conduct for members together with any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly;

“*day*” *means calendar day;*’

and insert –

“*Code of Conduct*” *means any code of conduct for members and the Guide to the Rules agreed to by the Assembly;*

‘*day*’ *means calendar day;*

‘*Guide to the Rules*’ *means any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly.*” — [Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures).]

Adjourned at 8.11 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 15 March 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

End of Mandate

Mr Speaker: Before we begin today's business, I will make some brief remarks to mark the end of the mandate. After I have made my comments, I will give the leaders of the five largest parties, or their nominated representatives, an opportunity to speak for up to five minutes. Thereafter, the process will follow that used for Matters of the Day: Members who wish to contribute should indicate so by rising in their places and continuing to do so. If called, they will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to make their remarks. I do not intend for this item to last for more than 45 or 50 minutes, but I will exercise some discretion on the time limit to try to include as many Members as possible. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until this item of business has finished.

I expect today to be the last meeting of the Assembly before Easter recess and dissolution on 29 March 2016. In the weeks to come, Members, candidates and parties will have plenty of opportunity to debate the achievements of the last five years. I will use today to put some appreciation on the record in terms of the support for Members and the contribution of Members.

Since May 2011, there have been 337 plenary sessions of the Assembly and approximately 2,545 Committee meetings. I anticipate that we are likely to have passed 67 Bills, 30 of them since last September, as I am sure some of you have noticed. We have also had more than 72,000 questions tabled. Amidst all of that during the mandate, there have been 270,000 visitors to Parliament Buildings. None of that could be done without the support of the staff of the Assembly, both the secretariat and our contractors, whether connected directly to our proceedings or welcoming our visitors, providing services or maintaining the Building. As someone first elected to the Assembly in 1998, I have, since becoming Speaker, gained a deeper insight and respect for the work that goes on behind the scenes to make this institution operate. I formally record the appreciation of the Assembly for the whole team in the Building. I also recognise the work of the staff of Members and parties, who have a difficult role but who play a significant part in supporting our proceedings. We are grateful for that, too.

I thank all Members for their cooperation. We have, for the most part, conducted our business with respect and good temper. We have had some very sensitive and serious debates in a completely different atmosphere to what was possible when I was first elected in 1998.

I will be back to preside over the first sitting of the new Assembly, but today allows me the privilege to recognise those colleagues who will not be returning in May. By my reckoning, some 16 Members are not seeking re-election, seven of whom, like me, have been here since 1998. I thank them all sincerely for their contribution over those years. Regardless of our political divisions, you have all brought something different to the Chamber and your constituencies. I want to acknowledge that being an elected representative, particularly in a society with our history, is not easy, and I thank you and your families for your service.

We have a new generation coming forward, and we have a responsibility to them. With retirements and co-options, I expect that more than 30% of the Members who were elected to here in May 2011 will not be here in May 2016. That is a very significant churn, but it also represents an outstanding opportunity to take the next steps in the development of our Assembly and to helping our society come to terms with the changes that have been wrought over those years. The election will also be the first one in which those born post the Good Friday Agreement will come on to the electoral register.

At one time, many of us here today would never have imagined that we would be together in the Chamber in these circumstances. I am constantly surprised by the number of people who comment to me or stop me to say that they have been watching business and particular discussions and debates in the Assembly. Despite what at times is very hostile and negative reportage, that underlines to me that many people in our community are deeply invested in this institution. The Assembly is, of course, imperfect, and the issues that it deals with are very challenging and difficult. Those of us who played some part in getting us this far are looking to all of you who are hoping to come back to work constructively to continue to improve it. We have a tragic past to deal with, but we also need to be focused on the future. The next weeks will be largely about party politics, but let me just give a gentle reminder that it is for every Member from every party to play a part in moving society forward.

Finally, Members will know that I hosted Assembly Women's Week last week, which involved close to 1,000 participants, and again saw great efforts and commitment from Assembly staff and great cooperation and mutual respect from every political party in this institution, with women giving the lead in that respect. I end today with one last reminder to parties and the electorate about the need for the Assembly to be representative of the population. We currently have 23 female Members. That is our best

record, but I think that most people would recognise that it is also a record of dismal failure. It is still nowhere near good enough. If we were truly to represent the community that we are elected by, we should have 51% women in the Assembly. When I preside over the registration of new Members and the election of a new Speaker, I will be looking very carefully to see how well we have improved on the existing record. I anticipate that we will improve on it, but I do not think that we are going to crack the 51%.

I wish all of you who are not coming back all the best for whatever the future holds. I hope that those of you seeking re-election enjoy the campaign, as well as have a successful one. To all those who are not coming back — I am one of them — I say that we should keep in touch. We are the owners of the corporate memory of this institution, and it has been a pleasure to know each and every one of you. Thank you very much. *[Applause.]*

Mr Hamilton: It is my pleasure to be able to stand in for my party leader, the First Minister, who is, of course, in the United States of America with the deputy First Minister this week doing what she does so well: working to attract jobs and investment to Northern Ireland.

I welcome this opportunity to briefly reflect on the Assembly term, which draws to an end this week. It is fair to say that the Assembly and the Executive have faced a range of challenges over the past five years. We began the term feeling the effects of the worst economic downturn in living memory and the subsequent impact of austerity. We experienced difficulties in passing welfare reform legislation to such an extent that the very existence of the devolved institutions was in serious jeopardy. In spite of our difficulties and in defiance of the doom merchants who wished to collapse Stormont, we came through our problems, and we are the stronger for it.

The Fresh Start Agreement reached in November was just that: an opportunity to begin again, to get our public finances back on an even keel and to resolve the issue of welfare reform. Welfare reform may have been the issue that threatened devolution most, but its resolution is a clear illustration of the benefits of devolution to Northern Ireland. A solution tailored to Northern Ireland's needs is always better than what direct rule would have produced.

There will be some who, for their own petty, party political reasons, will want to talk down devolution, but the evidence is clear: devolution has delivered for the people of Northern Ireland. Difficult decisions by successive Finance Ministers have ensured that we still have the lowest household taxes in the United Kingdom. We have increased investment in health and social care by over £0.5 billion, and we have employed 1,200 more nurses and nearly 300 more consultants. We have created more jobs than at any time in Northern Ireland's history, with 40,000 new jobs promoted through foreign direct investment, business start-ups and local support. We have built new roads, new schools and new hospitals, and we have rebuilt town and city centres. Our schools still produce the best examination results in the United Kingdom.

I would not, for a single second, dream of standing here and suggesting that things are perfect, because they are not. We have done a lot, but there is much more to do. If we are to keep Northern Ireland moving forward and capitalise on the progress that we have made, partnership will be required in this place. The Democratic

Unionist Party firmly believes that, for all its imperfections, devolution remains in the best interests of Northern Ireland and its people. We must do the best we can to govern well in spite of those imperfections and not waste our time dreaming of an undeliverable utopia. There will always be differences, but is debate inside Stormont not infinitely better than division on our streets?

As events in east Belfast in recent days have illustrated, we know only too well that our society is still polluted with those who would drag us back to the dark days of the past. They cannot, and they will not, be allowed to succeed.

Mr Speaker, this is your last day presiding over business in the Chamber. I had the pleasure of sitting under your chairmanship of the Finance Committee almost a decade ago, and I saw for myself your capacity to fairly yet firmly do your job. You brought that same style to the prestigious post of Speaker, and, on behalf of my party, I place on record our thanks to you for the way that you have impartially dealt with the business of the House and sensitively dealt with some difficult issues. I wish you well.

This item of business also allows us to pay tribute to those colleagues and even opponents who are not running for re-election. I offer my best wishes to everyone who is stepping down, particularly my party colleagues Stephen Mouray, Gregory Campbell and Peter Robinson.

Whether friend or foe, all of us enter public service with the best interests of Northern Ireland at heart; we just have different visions on how that can be achieved. In the weeks ahead, the Democratic Unionist Party looks forward to taking our vision and our plan for a better future to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Tá an-áthas orm bheith ag labhairt ar an ócáid seo ar maidin. It is a privilege to stand in for Martin McGuinness, who, like the First Minister, is in America.

We are very conscious that this is the last time that you will be presiding over a plenary session, although you have one more function to do. On behalf of my party colleagues in Sinn Féin, I put on record our great appreciation and deep admiration for how you carried out the Speaker's role. You brought to that role all your experience of over 40 years in political activism. We have seen your ability, wisdom, judgement, leadership and decisiveness. We have also seen, particularly in your role as Speaker, your firmness when you have had to put people in their place, be they party colleagues or not.

Even this year — the 100th anniversary of the Easter rising and the battle of the Somme — we have seen your compassion and sensitivity in the many events you held in the Assembly. That sets a template for how people can remember in a way that is mindful not only of our differences but of the fact that we have a shared narrative and a shared history. If I can break with convention once and perhaps not be pulled by you, as Speaker, I will say this: Mitchel, this team of Sinn Féin MLAs wishes you very well, and we wish you and your family all the best for the future. We know that you are not going into retirement; indeed, I have no doubt that the constituency of Foyle will have an interest in some of the work that you will do.

10.45 am

I also think it would be remiss of me not to mention John Dallat, the Deputy Speaker. I do not want to pick him out from the many colleagues who, as you say, are leaving this place and not seeking re-election; it is right and proper that we acknowledge all their roles and wish them all well for the future. However, I particularly want to mention John Dallat, the Deputy Speaker. I sat with John on the Regional Development Committee. He is a very courteous and hard-working person, and in his role as Deputy Speaker, he too displayed the necessary qualities of fairness and firmness when it was required.

I will make a few concluding remarks on the term. I put on record our appreciation of our five Ministers and the great work that they have carried out over the mandate. On behalf of the party, I thank all our MLAs, who, in my opinion, have made massive contributions to legislation, Committee work and the unseen work that the Assembly sometimes does not get the proper publicity for. There is absolutely no doubt that, against the backdrop of Tory-led austerity and the reduction in the block grant, the record of the Assembly in protecting the most vulnerable is there to be seen.

The Health Minister said that there were many challenges, and there will be many before us. However, if we show the stewardship and leadership that brought about the Fresh Start Agreement, none of those challenges are insurmountable. We have been innovative and have shown innovation in the past in how we addressed them.

There are headlines that the Assembly should seek praise for. When we go in front of the people, they are the final arbiters of whether this Assembly has worked and whether we, as public representatives, have fulfilled the promises we made at the last election. On May 5, the people will decide. However, there is absolutely no doubt that, against the backdrop of the economic downturn, 40,000 jobs were created. That is a plus, and it should be seen against that backdrop. The fact that we have secured and maintained the budget for health is to our credit. The Minister outlined the recruitment programme for more nurses, more allied health professionals and more consultants. There are still challenges for the health service, but we go forward from a position of strength.

It is very important, particularly against the backdrop of the recent election in the Twenty-six Counties, that, for issues like water charges, prescription charges, free domiciliary care and the delivery of education — the Minister ensured that equality was brought to the heart of all those issues and similarly with DARD and DCAL — we ensure that those in the most vulnerable places, the people who are under-resourced and those who perhaps did not have access to resources in the past are given access to them now. That is important, particularly on the issue of water charges, because we have seen how people in the Twenty-six Counties made that one of the key decisions and issues in the election.

As we go forward, our party is willing to play its part to ensure that the Assembly and the Executive will deliver for the people and protect them in future.

Mr McKinney: Mr Speaker, I think we all enter politics to make a difference. Individually, we help in the daily life of many of our constituents, but it is the Assembly's job and ours as politicians collectively to really make a difference for society as a whole. It is our job to ensure that our

people can and should dare to dream that life can be better; that our children will not be forced to leave these shores for the promise of work in Australia or America because of a failing economy — I referenced the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's latest research; that our health service provides a service that is fit for the 21st century and is not dominated by waiting-list headlines, among others; that we can provide world-class education and training for our young people; and that we become a much more cohesive society that is at peace, finally, with its troubled past. Can we say that in this mandate we have achieved that ambition on behalf of all our people?

We can point to collective achievements — local government reform among them — but just months ago the echoes of our past threatened our political future, reinforcing the challenges to our delicate political system that the Good Friday Agreement could never have foreseen. We cannot look back on a mandate and claim that it succeeded when we ended with a process we called 'A Fresh Start': a fresh start that failed to properly address the needs of victims and survivors; a fresh start that had Sinn Féin and the DUP handing welfare-cutting powers back to Westminster and not resolving it in the interests of the most vulnerable; and a fresh start that failed to reference job creation, economic development or a prosperity process as a top priority. There are many big challenges facing Northern Ireland, perhaps the biggest of which is to get people into work. It is our job to create the infrastructural and educational opportunities and to maximise those opportunities. The SDLP can sum it up simply in saying that we need to make Northern Ireland work and that the Assembly needs to make Northern Ireland work.

The public know, instinctively, that we have not delivered all that we could, which is why the public are looking to the next mandate and the next Programme for Government. Following the Assembly election, this party will heavily scrutinise the Programme for Government. If it does not come up to the mark, we will not be afraid to say so. In particular, we want the Programme for Government to adopt a much more joined-up style of government that delivers much greater accountability and transparency and will itself say that it wants Northern Ireland to work.

Nine years after the resurrection of devolution, can we say that the Assembly has worked for our population of 1.8 million, when less than half are economically active and when we generate revenues of £14 billion a year and consume close to £24 billion a year in public services? With the Conservatives committed to their stringent austerity programme, there will be no special dispensation for here. Our situation is fundamentally and economically unsustainable, and that is why we will not accept anything less than a detailed prosperity strategy come May. We need to do everything we can to bring investment and job opportunities. A prosperity strategy should also include a massive programme of workforce training and skills enhancement. We need to meaningfully address the levels of social deprivation that prevent far too many people here reaching their potential and cause such strain, for example, on our health service. The legacy of the Troubles has meant that some areas have fallen behind and are now dominated by long-term mental health issues and other long-term conditions brought about by long-term deprivation and unemployment. What sort of society are we if we continue to allow the most marginalised to be

further marginalised? What sort of Government have we become that we have not altered our deprivation statistics in any meaningful way in the past nine years? Creating much better social cohesion and integration must be another Programme for Government requirement.

Health reform, job creation, better infrastructure, creating world-class education and tackling social deprivation are issues on which the SDLP is not prepared to compromise. Stagnation at Stormont is no longer an option. In the next mandate, we want to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland, make things work and drive the changes that our society cries out for.

Finally, I thank all those who serve the Assembly for their positive contributions and all those who, in any way, influence and shape it. In that context, I thank you too, Mr Speaker, and I wish you well, along with all your colleagues who are retiring.

Mr Allen: It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party. Most importantly, I would like to start by paying tribute, on behalf of the party and, indeed, the Ulster Unionist MLA group, to Leslie Cree, Sam Gardiner, Michael McGimpsey, Michael Copeland and Neil Somerville, who will not be standing in the upcoming election but who all made a considerable impact in their respective constituencies and in Northern Ireland. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Danny Kinahan MP and Tom Elliott MP, who left the Ulster Unionist Party group for Westminster last year.

I also pay tribute to Members from other parties who are stepping down. I am sure that Members from across the House will join me in wishing them well.

I want to take this opportunity to also thank all the Ulster Unionist support staff, who have been instrumental in providing support to our MLAs. It would be remiss of me not to thank the support staff throughout Parliament Buildings, who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, and staff from the statutory agencies, who we, as MLAs, work closely with on a daily basis to support our constituents.

My thanks go to you, Mr Speaker, the Principal Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Speakers, who have presided over this House in a professional and diligent manner.

A lot has happened over the past five years. However, a lot more can and should be done to deliver a better Northern Ireland for all our people.

Last but not least, I would like to place on record my utmost thanks to Mr Welch, director of facilities; you, Mr Speaker; the team behind Mr Welch; the Assembly Commission; and all involved who have made every effort not only to accommodate me but other disabled visitors to this magnificent Building by taking measures to make it more accessible. That work is not finished, and I look forward to returning on 9 May with a strong Ulster Unionist Party team, delivering and doing what is right for Northern Ireland.

Mr Ford: Mr Speaker, particularly in the context in which you introduced this item, I suppose that it is natural that we should look back on some achievements, whether statistics on questions asked or numbers of Bills passed. However, there is certain danger that we then end up in a mood of self-congratulation, which does not entirely take into account the feelings that people in the community have about this Assembly.

There is no doubt that we have changed from the days when you and I first arrived here in 1998, but whether we have changed as much as people expected remains very much an open question. Whilst, unlike some in the Chamber, I have no doubt in my belief that devolution is better than direct rule, and I believe that we have actually shown a significant measure of delivery in comparison with what went before, we need to also acknowledge that that is a pretty low bar against which to set our standards. There are real challenges to ensuring that we deal with the frustration that is felt in the wider community and to actually addressing the key issues before us in a way in which we have not yet managed. We have not fully got a spirit of partnership and working together at Executive level, even if we do have some good examples from Committees in this place of how that should be done.

Others have referred to the so-called Fresh Start deal of last autumn. There is no doubt that it provided a degree of stability, but, all but 18 years from the Good Friday Agreement, is stability enough? We need to be moving on from the concept of saying that the institutions are surviving and, therefore, that is something good, to the point where we can genuinely say that the institutions are delivering. There is no doubt that we could look through a series of issues where we have not got the strategies in place that we need and where we have not spent the money that we should have spent on dealing with poverty and social inclusion. There are real challenges across every Department to ensure that we get a better measure of delivery in the future.

In the spirit in which others have highlighted the work of their Ministers, I certainly believe that we can say that six years of devolution of justice has made a difference. We have tackled issues like prison reform, youth justice and, I dare say, even legal aid, which were not tackled previously. As I acknowledged yesterday in the presence of a number of members of the Justice Committee, I acknowledge that that has worked, because we worked well in partnership between this Assembly, particularly the Justice Committee, and the Department. However, while we have made modest improvements on things like the removal of interface structures, there is still an awful lot more to be done that requires a much greater joining up of work between the future Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Justice than we have yet seen.

Let us acknowledge that, while we have made improvements, there is a lot more still to be done. In the same way, we can highlight some of our economic successes, and if Stephen Farry were here representing me — unfortunately for others, I am representing myself this morning — he would doubtless highlight the role that DEL has played in the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs and the 1,300 or so university places in STEM subjects and in work done around apprenticeships, all of which have been key to getting us started on the road of economic recovery, but there is such a lot more that still needs to be done.

I add my words of thanks to a number in this place who I regard as friends, if not exactly colleagues, in different parties, particularly the seven of the old guard who have been here since 1998. That number will potentially be even more diminished after the election, even should the good people of South Down decide to return Jim Wells

to this place yet again, or if the good people of South Antrim return me. We are clearly going through a time of transition. Mr Speaker, you highlighted the fact that, after May, the Assembly will be significantly changed compared with five years ago, and that has to be an opportunity to move things on.

11.00 am

In paying tribute to those who are leaving, I particularly mention my three colleagues: Judith Cochrane, whom you know well, Mr Speaker, from her work on the Assembly Commission, where she helped to make this place run more smoothly than would otherwise have been the case; Anna Lo, who has been a phenomenal Chair of the Environment Committee and introduced initiatives in a way that some Committee Chairs can grasp and other Chairs often do not grasp; and the particular old boy who is sitting directly behind me, Kieran McCarthy. I assure you that the Alliance Party will do its best to address the age and gender issue in providing Kieran's replacement in this place. I shall leave it there, but we need to address that issue collectively.

I thank those who sit beside you, Mr Speaker — the Clerk/Chief Executive and the Clerks — and all staff, from doorkeepers, cleaners and catering staff through to the entire secretariat, for the exceptionally good way in which we are served. I also thank you, Mr Speaker, for the role that you have performed. There were those who thought that it was not possible for somebody with your political background to be the Speaker of the House. You have proved that it is possible to make change and that it can be done by anybody from any background. The way in which you sought to reach out has been very welcome to all of us. The challenge for those of us who return to the Assembly will be in building the public services that our people want, ensuring that we get that across all our public services and ensuring that, in this place, we really start to build a united community.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. If Members want to make contributions, I will recognise them as best I can when they rise in their place.

Mr Campbell: I begin my contribution by thanking all the staff in this Assembly and in previous Assemblies, whom I found to be extremely courteous, diligent and helpful at all times.

I spent yesterday morning in the Senate Chamber at an event for victims, and I sat beside one of our youngest councillors in Northern Ireland. I asked him his age, and he told me that he was 24. I then pointed out to him that I was first elected to this Chamber in 1982, 10 years before he was even born. In the first 20 years of that time, violence was prolific. Politics was mired in quicksand. An agreement was always essential, but the right basis for getting it eluded parties here. When the right basis was eventually established, it still meant that hard and difficult choices had to be made. The DUP made the right choice and choices. We took the right decisions when it would have been easier to take the wrong ones, and, for that, we make no apology. For our stance, our statements and our comments since then, we make no apology whatsoever — none.

Over the last five years, people yearned for delivery, which has begun under the guidance of the DUP. Planning for the future cannot and must not mean forgetting the past.

Those who caused our bloody and deceitful past will not be allowed to erase their part in it. However much they try, they will not be allowed to do that. Battles must still be fought. For me, the arena will change and the venue will be different, but that campaign must and will be waged until it is won. I am not standing for election with my colleagues, but I am standing on the same ground, with them and beside them, and, together, we will take this country forward to be a much better place.

Mr A Maginness: In the last century, when I was first elected to the Assembly — *[Laughter.]* — people used to ask me what I did. I said that I was a fireman — a political fireman who put out political fires. That is what we did for the first five years or so: we put out political fires. I have become redundant, or semi-redundant, in relation to putting out political fires. I do that only on a part-time basis now because the political fires are much fewer than they were in the past. I feel as though I have changed and become an alchemist, in that my party and I have attempted to transform the lead of sectarianism and division into the pure gold of reconciliation, cooperation and community harmony. I hope that we can change that. I hope that, as I leave this place and a new mandate starts, I can relinquish the function of alchemist and that we will have a new dispensation in which we can, in fact, create that reconciliation, because the Assembly was created as a forum for reconciliation. What we have now is good, and we have achieved significant progress, but we need to do much, much better. We need to create a situation in which we can transform power-sharing into partnership — a dynamic, active partnership based on goodwill and harmony in which we can work together for the good of all of our people: Catholic and Protestant; nationalist and unionist. That is what the Assembly is all about.

I believe that we have made small progress towards that, but we can do much, much better. I look at the Justice Committee, which was mentioned yesterday during the Justice Bill debate, and see it as an exemplar of how people can work together, despite their political differences, and create a political consensus in order to make worthwhile changes in the justice system. That, I believe, is worthwhile and an exemplar of what we can do together on a non-partisan basis. You do not have to give up being SDLP, Sinn Féin or DUP; you can continue to hold on to that but work for the common good.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I thank you for your work in the Assembly, and I thank your distinguished predecessor, Willie Hay, for all of his work. Both of you acted in the interests of the whole Assembly and the whole community. You showed your independence and wisdom, and I believe that that should be properly recognised.

Ms Lo: In 2007, when I decided to run for election, it was an exciting time filled with a promise of change to a better, more inclusive and progressive society. I have seen change, though, borrowing a line from Yeats, "peace comes dropping slow". More still needs to be done.

As someone who cares deeply about the environment, I could not have picked a more appropriate Committee of which to be Chair. I thank all of the Environment Committee members, past and present, who have worked so well together in the spirit of respect and partnership for the common good. I was delighted to have initiated the inaugural Environment Week, which I hope will be an annual event. I also express my gratitude to the very able Committee staff

whom we rely on so much to function effectively. I also pay tribute to the environment sector whose expertise and commitment have been invaluable to us.

As the only ever MLA from an ethnic minority background, I was glad to be in a position to set up the all-party group on ethnic minorities and human trafficking, as well as to lobby extensively with the voluntary sector for a racial equality strategy, which was finally published last year. I hope that MLAs will continue to monitor progress on those issues and to speak out against racism. I will be watching you.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Ms Lo: As one of the few pro-choice MLAs, I was naturally disappointed that the two amendments to the Justice Bill, one tabled by colleagues and one by me, to allow abortion in very limited circumstances did not pass. We cannot afford to ignore the issue; women need our help.

I want to thank my constituents. It has been an enormous privilege to be an MLA for South Belfast, a constituency that is so vibrant and diverse.

Finally, I want to thank all the Members of the Assembly with whom I have worked. In particular, I would like to thank my Alliance Party colleagues for their support and friendship. I look forward to seeing more positive changes in the next mandate. I wish you all the very best for the future. Thank you.

Mr Allister: Self-praise is a poor recommendation. I say that in the context of the contributions of the DUP/Sinn Féin cabal that controls this House. To many, this House and these institutions are a byword for failure and squander. The primary responsibility for that rests on those who control the House; those who heap self-praise upon themselves today.

When I was elected to the Assembly in 2011, the then First Minister, Mr Peter Robinson, boasted that the Assembly should be judged on delivery. I do indeed hope that the people will judge it on delivery because that delivery has been so abysmal that it deserves the judgement of the people on it. If that is to be the benchmark, bring on the delivery of the verdict.

Those, of course, who created the dysfunctional mess tell us that they have made a fresh start — a commentary in itself that that which they have presided over needed a fresh start. They had run it into such chaos that that is what it required. There is no doubt that they hope now to con many people that they who created the mess will in fact create a fresh start.

That fresh start, of course, was possible only by the DUP's sweeping murder under the carpet. A Government panel reported that the IRA still existed and was still armed, that it had murdered again, and that it still had an army council that had control over party and paramilitary organisation. All that was swept under the carpet for the purpose and sake of keeping the limos and the Government positions and carrying on as normal. I trust that that, too, will not be forgotten; that the price of that fresh start was indeed that ignoble start of sweeping murder under the carpet.

Mr Speaker: Thank you —

Mr Allister: The truth is that these institutions —

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Allister: — because they defy the basic dynamics of democracy and deny the people the right to change their Government and have a proper opposition will need a lot more than a fresh start.

Mr Speaker: Thank you for those warm and generous comments. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Agnew: I would like to say that it has been a privilege to serve the people of North Down over the last five years. Further to that, I am proud to have represented the views of Green Party members and supporters across Northern Ireland, as currently our sole MLA.

11.15 am

One of my early victories was the number of people who contacted me when I made speeches to say that they felt for the first time that someone was representing their views. As someone who had previously felt that Northern Ireland politics did not reflect me, I take it as a privilege and a position of responsibility to articulate those views and to make the arguments for the policies and values of the Green Party in Northern Ireland. However, I was never satisfied just to be here. Being elected was not, in itself, enough, which is why, in December, when my private Member's Bill became law with the Children's Services Co-operation Bill being enacted, it was a very proud day for me and my party. We were able to say that we had promised change and had delivered it in an area as vital as children's services. It was a Bill about cooperation. For that reason, I thank the Bill Office, OFMDFM and Members across the parties for their cooperation in bringing forward that very important law.

I have also sought to lead on issues such as marriage equality, transparency and environmental protection. That is why, although I go into the election confident but not complacent, I will be making the argument that we need to keep a Green presence in the Assembly and to increase it, because equal marriage, transparency and environmental protection are still works in progress in Northern Ireland.

I hope that the naughty corner will be emboldened by having more Greens at the other side of the election, and I am confident that we will provide an effective opposition to whoever make up the next Executive.

To those such as you, Mr Speaker, who are not seeking re-election, I wish you well. I believe that there is not only a life after politics but most likely a better life after politics. It is one that I look forward to but, hopefully, not as soon as May.

On your point, Mr Speaker, on the number of women in the Assembly, it has been a failure of our parties to date to get women elected, and that is why my party introduced quotas and, for the first time, is standing nine female candidates out of a total of 18. That is 50% of our candidates, because we believe that the Assembly should reflect our society.

Mr B McCrea: I rise for the last time to address the Assembly. I thank the people of Lagan Valley for the privilege of representing them over the past nine years. It seems like only yesterday that I first got here, awestruck by the names on the doors of people that I had seen only on television, and, yet, here we are.

The highlight of my time here was when I chaired the Committee for Employment and Learning. There were

some great colleagues there: Jim Allister, before anybody would talk to him; Fra McCann, a great inspiration; Chris Lyttle; and Pat Ramsey. Those were good days. I enjoyed dealing with the challenges of further and higher education, youth unemployment, NEETs and careers advice. That was real politics. It was what I enjoyed. I carried on that work on the all-party group on science and technology, and, when I am gone from this place, I hope that those who are still here will take up the challenge of science and technology, because that is where the jobs are and that is where the future is.

I also enjoyed my time on the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. I believe passionately in the arts. Arts are not an overhead. They inspire us, they unite us and they give us hope. We need to do more for the arts. Hopefully, whoever follows me will also take the lead in championing the arts.

I am proud of what I achieved and of what I tried to achieve. For those who follow me now and in the future, I will give them a famous quotation from Winston Churchill:

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal...”

— what matters is to have the courage to go on. I will go on. I will leave this place with my head high, with my colours flying, with my dignity intact and with all conviction about what is good for Northern Ireland. In conclusion, two roads diverged in the woods, and I took the road less travelled. That has made all the difference.

Ms Sugden: First and foremost, I pay tribute to all the people of East Londonderry. It has been my privilege to represent them in the House. After the loss of my predecessor and dear friend and mentor David McClarty in 2014, my constituents welcomed me into East Londonderry as their representative, and we have done fantastic work since. In my role as an MLA, I am most satisfied when I am serving my constituents, whether it be their individual needs or working with the community and voluntary groups that I have met over the past two years. It will be my privilege to continue to serve them when I am returned to the House in May.

Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to your leadership of the House. The way that you have conducted yourself and the way that you have harboured a sense of respect in the House should be commended. You are a gentleman. You have treated me, as a Back-Bench Member and an independent of the House, with fairness and courtesy, and you have given me many opportunities. I sincerely wish you well in your retirement.

I want to thank all the MLAs of the House. A quality of a good politician is to build relationships. It is how we get things done, and it is certainly something that I have sought to do with every side of the House. I really appreciate that every Member has welcomed me and embraced me, and we have built up those good relationships, so that we have got work done. It has not necessarily been work reported in the news, but we have done work behind closed doors. Contrary to what a lot of people think, we do sometimes do something up here.

I give best wishes to all those who are not seeking re-election. In particular, I pay tribute to my constituency colleagues John Dallat MLA and Gregory Campbell MP/MLA, particularly Gregory Campbell. We have an awful lot of work to do in East Londonderry, and I look forward

to working with him when I am returned as an MLA and he continues his work as an MP.

I wish to pay tribute to the staff of the House. We have the craic. It makes the hour and a half journey coming up here much more enjoyable. Again, they have welcomed me. They are as much part of the fabric of this place as the Members and their staff, and that should be acknowledged.

Politics in Northern Ireland is changing. It is a generation since the Good Friday Agreement. That signals that we have to now embrace the new generation. Time will be a great healer in Northern Ireland — nothing else — and until the people who were involved in the Troubles are no longer involved in politics, I do not think that Northern Ireland will truly move on. The people who will remain here, maybe for the next five or 10 years, who were involved in the Troubles will pave the way for a new generation. That is important.

This mandate has not been perfect. It has actually been quite frustrating. I am a student of politics — many degrees and all that — but the one person whom I take a lot of my experience from taught me that politics is about people. We need to embrace that in the next mandate. Last year, when we saw Ministers going in and out of office, that was not respecting people. If I can encourage anything in the next mandate, it is that we start putting the people of Northern Ireland first.

Mr Speaker: On behalf of the Assembly, I congratulate you on your recent engagement.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr McCarthy: I wish to express my sincere gratitude to a great many people for giving me the chance to represent them in the Assembly for the past 18 years. First, I want to thank God for giving me the health and the strength to perform my work and my duties on behalf of the community. I want to thank my wife and my family. I want to thank the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland and my good colleagues on each side of me and in front of me and to thank David Ford and Stephen Farry, as Ministers, for their work in the Assembly.

I thank my voters in Strangford, my loyal staff in Ards, the volunteers and the many groups I have worked with during the past 30 years as a public servant. I thank everyone in this Building for their help, courtesy and comradeship over the years. That goes right from the security outside the gates to those inside the Building, from the cleaners to the chief executive of this place. I say, “Thank you”. We are all ordinary people simply doing a job, and everyone has been extremely helpful.

I am very proud to have served as a member of the Alliance Party in the Assembly. Alliance has played a pivotal role for years in establishing a power-sharing Administration, respect and diversity in Northern Ireland. First came the Good Friday Agreement, then came the M-Day — the miracle day — on 8 May 2007, when the late Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness walked down the steps in the Great Hall to tell the world that hostilities were over and they were going to work together for the good of all the people in Northern Ireland. We truly have come a long way, and thank God for it. What a pity so many people had to suffer. We must never, ever forget all our victims.

I thank all 107 Assembly colleagues for their help, friendship and cooperation over the past 18 years. I will never forget the outpouring of sympathy, almost three years ago next month, when my family was plunged into unimaginable grief. You all helped to get us through that dreadful period. I thank Martin McGuinness. Martin McGuinness made his way to my room on the third floor and spent 20 minutes with me offering sympathy on behalf of himself and his party. That is something I will never forget. That is what human nature is all about.

I wish everyone here every success for the future. Leaving the Assembly, I would like my legacy to be advancing mental health and learning disability, which can no longer be the Cinderella of the health service, and advancing apartment owners' protection and the preservation of our precious townland names. As I leave the Assembly this evening for the very last time, I hope to be replaced by a bright, young and enthusiastic lady called Kellie Armstrong, who has the welfare of Northern Ireland at heart.

I wish you, Mr Speaker, and all our colleagues good luck for a bright future and a healthy retirement. For my final few words, I appeal to our First Minister and deputy First Minister and their new Executive to keep Northern Ireland stepping forward faster and to create a better future in peace and prosperity for everyone, particularly senior citizens. I have never raised my voice in the House until now, when I will say this loud and clear: hands off our bus passes. Hands off our bus passes. *[Laughter.]*

[Applause.]

Mr Speaker: Thank you. I call Mr John McCallister.

Mr McCarthy: Go raibh míle maith agat and slán go fóill. Ta tae yez aw an sae lang the noo. Thanks very much, and goodbye. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McCallister: It would have been such a shame to have to have him removed on his last day.

Mr Speaker, I will begin by paying tribute to you and the respect agenda you have set in your time in the Speaker's office. That has been an important contribution, as have the speeches you made outlining that and how we respect the diversity of our community. That has been important in the Assembly, in its culture and the feel it gives to it coming out from the prestigious office that you hold. That is important, and I wish you and your family well in your retirement.

I am, like Ms Sugden, one of those who hope to be back here in a number of weeks, and it never fails to impress any of us coming up to this Building. I remember vividly from nine years ago, when I was first elected, the enormous sense of pride I had in arriving at the Building for the first time as a Member and the contributions that everybody made.

11.30 am

While there is partly a disappointment in some regards about what the Assembly and Executive have achieved, the one thing that they have achieved is to have got people talking from very different and difficult backgrounds. As Mr Hamilton said, it is much better having a robust debate in here than division on our streets. Through positions on various Committees, I have watched people engage. Suddenly, some of those divisions come down, because healthcare is important regardless of what side of the community you are

from. What we do about tackling poverty and educational underachievement hits everyone. Sometimes, with those issues, you see that being broken down.

In this term, I am particularly proud of the private Member's Bill to reform the way that the Assembly does its business, and I hope that the messages from all of the political parties seem to be that there is a will to have a much more collective and cohesive Executive on the other side of an election. I hope that that means that people start to deliver and that the Executive will be held to account by a robust opposition and, indeed, possibly by an emboldened "naughty corner", for want of a better phrase. It is important to have that challenge and scrutiny.

To everyone who is retiring, I wish you all well and every success in the future.

Mr Speaker: The final Member who I have time for is Deputy Speaker John Dallat.

Mr Dallat: Mr Speaker, I had not planned to speak because I realise that, even though it is our last day, we are scheduled to sit here until 9.15 pm. However, it would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to you as Speaker and to the previous Speaker, Willie Hay, who initially moulded me into the role of Deputy Speaker. I want to also briefly say thanks to the people in all of the political parties who made life exceptionally easy for me. You have been more than good. There were times when you could have had my scalp and you did not do it.

If I were to give some advice to new Members coming in, that advice would be this: if you want to be happy in this Building, get to know the people outside the Chamber — the cleaners, the ushers, the security people and, in particular, the ones in the canteen. They are the heart and soul of the Building, and, as I leave it, I am exceptionally proud of them. They come from the north, the south, the east and the west of this city, and, if you really want to know what is going on, you ask them because they are the heart and soul of this place.

Mr Speaker: I thank all of those who contributed to that discussion in that session.

Plenary Business: Monday 14 March 2016

Mr Speaker: As all business on yesterday's Order Paper was considered, we will move on.

Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2016

Mrs Cochrane: I beg to move

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme [NIA 329/11-16] laid before the Assembly on 8 March 2016 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

I move the motion on behalf of the Assembly Commission. Members will be aware that the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000 provides for the Commission to bring a scheme to make such payment to the Assembly. Any payment to a political party under the financial assistance for political parties (FAPP) scheme can only be made for the express purpose set out in section 1 of the 2000 Act, and that is for assisting Members of the Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

That purpose is replicated at article 1 of the scheme. The FAPP scheme does not provide payments to individual Members, nor does it provide payments to parties for any purposes other than assisting Members of that party to carry out their Assembly duties.

In tabling the motion today, the Assembly Commission seeks to meet two objectives. First, in line with its continuing commitment to deliver savings in its controllable running costs, the Commission unanimously agreed to reduce its operating expenditure by 5% for the 2016-17 financial year. While the Commission's budget for 2016-17 was unchanged from the 2015-16 figure, the Commission is mindful of the cuts applied across the wider public sector and agreed to reduce its controllable costs by 5%. That level of cut has been applied to the rates of assistance payable to parties under the revised financial assistance to political parties scheme.

Secondly, the Commission unanimously agreed some further revisions to the FAPP scheme to give effect to the proposals for additional funding to be made available for opposition parties in the Assembly from the start of the new mandate in May 2016. That followed the Assembly's endorsement on 8 February 2016 of the statement of proposed entitlements for an opposition, as set out in the Fresh Start Agreement, and the Assembly's call for the Speaker to take forward the implementation of those actions before the end of the mandate. That proposal will mean that, should an opposition party or parties be in place after the May election, funding will be reallocated from all the other parties to help to meet the increased funding payable to an opposition party or parties. Therefore, the revised scheme includes different payment rates to cover the different scenarios of there being no opposition party or of there being one or more opposition parties.

Members will also note that the changes to the number of Departments have a further impact on the FAPP funding. Currently, no payments are made in respect of a Member who holds a ministerial post, so the reduction in the number of Ministers will also have a modest impact on the funding that is available.

The proposed changes today will ensure that all parties take their share of the cuts that the wider public sector faces but, at the same time, ensure that the proposals for additional funding for an opposition party or parties, as set out in 'A Fresh Start', are met. When considering the matter, the Commission was, however, also very aware of the changes that are likely to be brought about by Mr McCallister's Bill, by wider developments relating to the development of opposition parties and by any future cuts that might be made to the Commission's budget. The Commission therefore agreed that this was an interim measure and that a fundamental review of the entire FAPP scheme should be carried out as soon as possible in the next mandate, including any required legislative change to ensure that we have an open, transparent and fit-for-purpose scheme.

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for her contribution not just on this motion but as a member of the Assembly Commission. You have held that post with distinction right through your term.

I am grateful that the need to apply a cut to the payments under FAPP is recognised as a necessary part of any package of measures to ensure that the Assembly Commission meets its agreed budget reductions in 2016-17. The Assembly Commission unanimously agreed the planned 5% cut and the reallocation of funds between opposition and non-opposition parties after the next Assembly election in May 2016. The fundamental structure of the scheme and, therefore, the nature of the split of the funding under FAPP between parties of certain sizes and between the two elements of the scheme — general party funding and funding for the Whips' offices — were not a specific consideration for the Commission at this time. The Commission was concerned with the twin aims of meeting the budget cut for 2016-17 and implementing the intent of the Fresh Start Agreement. In doing so, the Commission fully recognised that the proposals for an opposition and how that might develop and the level of budget cuts that have been levied in recent years may require a more substantive review of the entirety of the FAPP scheme.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mrs McKeivitt: I will.

Mr Allister: Speaking to the need for a more radical approach, how does this come anywhere close to meeting the needs of an opposition, which is opposition to a Government with, presently, 19 special advisers, each costing an average of £106,000 a year, and an army of civil servants to their back? What we have is the suggestion of a few pounds thrown at an opposition to provide opposition to that. Where is the equality of arms that would be necessary to provide for a real and effective opposition if all we are suggesting is £60,000 to fund two researchers at £30,000 each, when there are 19 special advisers who are paid £106,000 each? Where is the equality of arms?

Mrs McKeivitt: My party did not sign up to one part of the Fresh Start deal, but we definitely support this part. Under the current Budget, it is a cost-neutral effect. That is why it is proposed that the Commission will agree that the FAPP scheme should be reviewed in the new mandate. This approach is a one-year measure.

I thank Members for their support. As I said, it was agreed unanimously at the Commission, and we look forward to its implementation.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme [NIA 329/11-16] laid before the Assembly on 8 March 2016 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

Ministerial Statements

Sign Language Legislation: Initiation

Mr Speaker: The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure wishes to make a statement on the initiation of the sign language legislation process. I am pleased that the Assembly is able to provide a signing service for this item. We are slightly ahead, but I hope that the signer will turn up soon. I think that we should proceed, Minister.

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Before I begin my statement, I will refer to today's first item of business, which will, hopefully, allow time for the signer to come in. I wish everybody who is retiring from the House well. It has been a pleasure to work with everyone across all parties. There were cross exchanges at times, but I believe that most Members, if not all, have done their business with integrity. It was a privilege to work with them. I wish you, a Cheann Comhairle, all the best in your retirement. In particular, I mention my party colleague who is not standing again, Bronwyn McGahan. It has been an absolute privilege to work with her and everybody else.

I will now move on to the statement. With your permission, a Cheann Comhairle, I want to update the House on my intention to publish and consult on a framework for promoting sign language, including proposals for legislation.

On 1 December 2015, I announced my intention to publish and consult on a framework for promoting sign language that would include proposals for legislation to be taken forward in the new Assembly mandate. I outlined to the House that, although Irish and British sign languages were recognised as languages in their own right in 2004 by the then Secretary of State, Mr Paul Murphy, there was no statutory protection for either language, they were not covered by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and there was no formal Executive-agreed policy or strategy document for Irish and British sign languages. I informed the House that I intended, with Members' help, to change that position, and that remains the case.

I will outline the work that my Department has carried out to date on the three key actions that I announced on 1 December 2015: the pre-consultation, Executive engagement and public consultation. I announced my intention to engage in a period of pre-consultation. My officials held a series of preconsultation meetings in December 2015 and January 2016. Those meetings were held with a variety of key stakeholders, including representatives of the key deaf organisations on the sign language partnership group, members of the deaf community and parents of deaf children. Queen's University, which has held a master's course for Irish and British sign language interpreters, and Ulster University, which is in the second year of a postgraduate certificate in education course for deaf Irish and British sign language teachers, also contributed to the process.

The concepts, views and ideas discussed during the preconsultation process have been incorporated into the draft framework.

The framework, therefore, is the product of meaningful and continuous dialogue with the key stakeholders. It was vital that every opportunity was given to the representatives of this marginalised community to contribute to the framework,

which has the potential to change their lives by tackling social exclusion. The feedback from the pre-consultation is reflected in the co-designed nature of the framework document, of which the deaf community and its representatives can justifiably claim a sense of shared ownership.

11.45 am

As I informed the House in December, I had already written to ministerial colleagues to seek their support for and commitments to the framework. In November 2015, I wrote informing them of my intention to put forward an Executive paper outlining my Department's policy proposals to support improvements to access to services for deaf sign language users and their families. At the same time, I forwarded a copy of the sign language road map review final report, which was the result of a deaf-led process of consultations between Damian Barry, who is the deaf author of the road map report, and Departments, amongst other stakeholders, to examine the provision of services to sign language users, with a series of recommendations on how to improve service provision.

Following the period of pre-consultation, I produced an Executive paper to accompany the sign language framework with proposals for legislation. The paper made the case for the need for such a framework with proposals for legislation and informed colleagues of my intention to publish and consult on the framework before the end of this month.

I have been encouraged by the support of ministerial colleagues to date, and I acknowledge their feedback and their suggestions in taking this process forward; indeed, I have been very encouraged by the support from Members of the House as a whole, including members of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, whom my officials have briefed.

I acknowledge that the building of the sustainable infrastructure necessary to support Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language users and their families will involve financial investment, particularly in its early stages. There may be concerns in some quarters about such an investment in times of austerity. However, the Programme for Government 2011-15, priority 5, titled "Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services", states:

"Citizens have, whether in times of recession or not, the right to expect excellent public services and value for money. As an Executive, we are acutely aware of the need to deliver, and this is why we have identified this as a priority."

Sign language is about including some of the most marginalised people in our society, and it must be a priority for all of us. The framework and its accompanying proposals for legislation are predicated on the need to improve access to public services for a marginalised community that has experienced generations of inequality and social exclusion resulting from historical underinvestment in access to services through their language of need. When we are acutely aware of the poor life outcomes experienced by this community, the financial costs argument is less compelling.

My December statement acknowledged that this would be a challenging programme of work, but I have since taken the necessary steps to bring us to the point where we

can publish and consult on the sign language framework with proposals for legislation. As I have outlined, I have ensured that the co-designed framework reflects the views and needs of the deaf community after an extensive period of pre-consultation. I have engaged with my Executive colleagues to seek their support for the policy proposals in the framework. Further Executive agreement will be sought in due course on the final policy proposals for legislation, following the consultation process and before agreement to draft the Bill is sought.

I want to outline the upcoming consultation process because it will be unique in the North of Ireland. My previous statement outlined that the consultation document would be made available in the form of an online survey, with additional formats on request, including Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language translations, and I went on to say that the 12-week consultation would be widely publicised and open to everyone who wished to respond. The consultation will now run for an extended period of 16 weeks. There are two reasons for that: first, in the run-up to the Assembly election, departmental representatives will not be able to attend public consultations; and, secondly, the extended time frame will ensure that key stakeholders and the community will have the opportunity to engage with departmental representatives after the election.

This will be the first time that the deaf community will have had the opportunity to engage in public consultation solely on their issues. The feedback that my officials have received from deaf organisations suggests that there will be a big demand from deaf persons to have their say, and rightly so. They have waited a long time for the opportunity.

Secondly, this will be a consultation on policy proposals for sign languages. Sign languages use hand shapes, movement of the hands, body language, facial expressions and lip patterns to convey meaning. They are visual languages, and this will be the first time in the North that a public consultation will be carried out with sign language as a primary method of communication. Therefore, the usual written medium for consultations will not suffice. The framework consultation documents will be translated into Irish and British sign languages, and, likewise, responses will be translated from those languages. The availability of language interpreters throughout the consultation may also impact on the ability of the deaf community to get its views across. The extended consultation period will allow for that. It is entirely appropriate and right that a framework co-designed with the deaf community for the deaf community should be delivered in their language of need.

My officials' preconsultation meetings with the deaf organisations highlighted the use of social media by the Scottish deaf community during the consultation process that led to the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. Facebook played a prominent role in sign language users responding to the consultation document in their native British Sign Language. It is my intention that this consultation will be sign language-friendly; after all, that is the point of the framework. Access to sign language should be viewed as a right and not an inconvenience. It is planned, therefore, to maximise social media opportunities. That will include setting up a Facebook page dedicated to the consultation that will allow people to submit responses in text or by video, enabling them to use sign language

if they wish. The page will be promoted across the other official Executive social media and online platforms.

In short, the aims of the framework are described under three themes: prevention, to ensure that future generations of deaf children and young people reach adulthood with the best chance of securing full social inclusion and better life outcomes; correction, to increase social inclusion for the current generation of deaf people, many of whom have left education with few academic qualifications, by providing access to ongoing personal and social development to enable them to participate fully in their society; and care and protection, to recognise and protect the cultural and linguistic rights of Irish and British sign language users and to build the sustainable infrastructure necessary to promote and support them and their families.

Some may wonder how a framework can be translated from a document to society to make a meaningful difference to people's lives. My view is that implementing the framework has already begun. In 2015-16, my Department has targeted increased funding at projects that outline a template of support for deaf people from birth to old age. I have committed funding to the National Deaf Children's Society for increased numbers of family sign language courses, including courses delivered in the home by the British Deaf Association, to equip parents and families with the signing skills to communicate with their deaf children. Research highlights that such early intervention communication can improve educational outcomes for deaf children.

DCAL is also funding Jordanstown School to deliver British Sign Language levels 1 and 2 courses for parents of deaf children who wish to develop their signing skills with their children. I was delighted to visit those classes in January of this year and meet the parents and their children. I have the utmost admiration for their drive and determination to give their children the best possible start in life, and I am determined to help them through this framework. My Department is also funding St Joseph's Centre for Deaf People to deliver deaf awareness and age-specific British Sign Language classes across 40 primary schools in counties Antrim and Down. In addition, selected secondary schools are receiving deaf awareness and Irish or British sign language classes through our funding of Ulster University's signing for improved deaf awareness project.

That project also delivers such classes to all four university campuses to make them deaf-friendly and to inspire the future professionals who will deliver services to deaf children to learn sign language.

DCAL has also funded Action Deaf Youth to deliver a British Sign Language level 1 course for deaf children and young people and for children of deaf adults to promote social inclusion and to provide the qualifications necessary for future careers as interpreters and sign language tutors. Those DCAL-funded projects directly contribute to the prevention aim of the framework. We have previously funded such courses up to level 6, which has enabled young deaf people to access those careers. This year's funding represents the start of a new cycle that will hopefully build up to level 6 courses over the next few years.

DCAL has committed funding to the translation of material for the driving theory test into British Sign Language. That will help deaf people learn to drive and potentially increase their employment options. My Department is

also funding the Foyle Sign Language Centre in Derry to deliver Irish and British sign language courses to the families of older generation sign language users to allow them to communicate more effectively with their parents and grandparents. That funding also delivers deaf awareness and sign language classes to local businesses and the voluntary community to encourage greater social integration between older sign language users and the local community, as well as providing for social activities. The projects contribute to the correction aim of the framework.

The care and protection aim of the framework is self-explanatory. In my December statement, I informed the House that I had listened carefully to what the deaf community was saying. They want legislation to safeguard their right as a cultural and linguistic community and want to access services in their own language. In short, they want the care and protection that sign language legislation will bring. This has been a challenging programme of work, and I thank the deaf community and other stakeholders for their engagement and their contributions to the framework.

In December, I asked this question of each and every Member of the House: what choices would you make if your child or grandchild was born unable to hear? I also referred to Emma, the hearing mother of a young deaf son, Patrick, who highlighted the difficulties that families such as hers face when they are informed that their child is deaf. I have met Emma several times, and I know the choices that she is making for Patrick. She is leading a growing number of parents of deaf children who are speaking up for children and demanding better interventions for their child and their family.

As I have stated previously, I believe that one word sums up why we must deliver Executive recognition of and protection for sign language: "inclusion". Current and future generations of sign language users and their families must have access to the services that our Departments provide in their own language. Patrick deserves the same rights, accessibility and inclusion throughout our society as his hearing peers will enjoy. I encourage you and your constituents to respond to the consultation and ensure that Patrick and deaf adults and children across the North receive those rights.

Mr McCausland (The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): The members of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, across all the parties, were very supportive of the initiative. There is a recognition that more work needs to be done in the area to meet the needs of people in the deaf community, so people are very supportive of that.

The Minister pointed out that you cannot really put a cost on these things, but, if we are to look at things that might be done going forward, does she have some sense of the costs? Is she happy to make sure that the resources will be made available?

Ms Ní Chuilín: First, I thank the Chair of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee for his continued support. He is right to say — I mentioned this in my statement — that there are some difficulties in getting absolute costings at this stage. However, there will be emerging themes as the consultation process develops. Indeed, there were emerging themes in the preconsultation process around tuition, sign language classes for British and Irish sign language tuition and support for families. We already know

what those costs are, but they are likely to increase. We will also have to try to predict what additional services will be needed.

The final cost will be published when the Bill is brought to the future Executive for support. Without making any assumptions and albeit that the costs will certainly be higher in the first instance, I believe that it will be money well worth spending, particularly given the legacy of inequality that this community has faced. I believe that all Members want to put right that wrong.

12.00 noon

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for the statement. It is very welcome among the deaf community, with whom I work closely, particularly the Hands That Talk folk in Dungiven. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on the provision of a signer here today. It is important that, when we deal with this issue, signing is provided. Thank you for that.

Will the Minister outline what support she has given to sign language users?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. As I outlined in the statement, the support that we have given in DCAL has ensured that sign language classes for parents and family members take place. There was a gap there, and we met it. We have also provided good leadership. With my officials, I have invested a lot of time in ensuring that, once the road map was brought forward and the gaps were identified, we very quickly tried to meet those gaps. That is why we did the pre-consultation and why we are putting it out for consultation today. I have no doubt that that will be continued by the people who brought the process to us thus far and my officials. I believe that all Members, going back to December of last year right through to today, will give good regard and respect to the consultation and will encourage full involvement and participation in it to ensure that support for the deaf community is not left with the Department. We all need to come in behind a group who have faced decades of discrimination through a lack of investment and inclusion.

Mrs McKevitt: I thank the Minister for her statement. It is a very proud day: this has been brought to the House on the last day of business.

Our party is very supportive of the proposals to promote and increase the use of British and Irish sign language. Ahead of the debate, I made enquiries with the events team in Parliament Buildings to ensure that we offered sign language tour experiences here. I was pleased to learn that we do with prior notice. Will the Minister advise whether, during the preconsultation period, any assessment was carried out in departmental arm's-length bodies, such as the Northern Ireland Museums Council, to ensure that sign language tours and educational programmes are offered at every venue? If not, will she ensure that such an assessment is carried out?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her comments and, indeed, her support as a member of the CAL Committee. It is not just the museums; I suspect that every ALB right across each of the Departments will provide sign language support on request. The deaf community say that that prohibits them from accessing culture, arts and leisure and all Executive services across the board on an equal relationship with others. That needs to be corrected. I

would be absolutely shocked if that did not come out as part of the consultation.

The Assembly, through the Speaker's office and events, has led by example, but, again, it is on request. When we are looking at and organising events and people are asked about the requirements that they have, once those requirements are made known, provision happens. In my opinion, for tours that are organised across all the Departments, including my ALBs, it should be built in rather than having to be asked for. I would like to see that being corrected as part of the consultation process.

Mr Cree: I also thank the Minister for her very full paper this afternoon. I was going to ask about cost, but that has been covered. Obviously, from the point of view of using signing and having available an Irish version and a British version, there could be complications.

I am just wondering about tours, for example, where it would probably be over the top to have two, with one obviously having to be more dominant. How similar are the sign languages?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I believe the Member's question is based on the intent to give this as much support as possible. The sign languages are based around Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language. In November, I went to a world conference for the deaf that was hosted in Belfast. There are differences even within British Sign Language. For example, colleagues from Scotland were talking about differences in what they use compared with those from Australia. This is Sign Language Week, as luck would have it, and some of the participants who were up yesterday were talking about the differences in the languages.

Let us try to be as inclusive as we can. I think that, up until this point, all Members have tried to show respect and due regard — I do not believe this will not be the case from here on in — and to be as inclusive as possible. Let us use the consultation process to find out as best we can exactly what the needs are. Let us, collectively across each of our parties, put our best foot forward to try to ensure that people in the deaf community have services, information and access and can participate like the rest of us.

Mr Hilditch: I certainly welcome the statement. There appears to be a lot of best practice out there, particularly in countries such as the Scandinavian countries, that have been a bit in front of us here in Northern Ireland. Will the Minister ensure that, in promoting sign language, best practice will be gleaned from other jurisdictions?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The short answer is "Yes", but I just want to let the Member know that we have some of the best experts here on our own shores. From as far back as 2004 and going right through, those experts have delivered a very robust road map. They have taken all the expertise and experience from right across and tried to build the best possible road map for deaf families here. They have already done that. We should not undervalue or fail to appreciate the skills and expertise that we have here. We have them here, and we need to support them.

I believe that the consultation period will not only support the work that has been done thus far but will help inform the Assembly, the Executive, future Assembly mandates and all the arm's-length bodies in going forward. These people not only have the expertise but are making progression plans to pass those skills and that expertise

on to the next generation. In fairness to them, they are way ahead of the rest of us. This consultation process is very important to ensure that, whatever legislature they are responsible for and accountable to, we get the expertise and experience of everyone who has brought this forward. We will then build that in so that we have the best possible legislation for our deaf families here.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for her statement. The Minister mentioned the Scottish Act in her statement. Is she aware that the Scottish legislation is based on a national plan, whereby local authorities contribute? Will the consultation include the Scottish plan?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Again, the short answer is "Yes, it will". In Scotland, all the local authorities, government bodies and arm's-length bodies signed up to a plan. We want to have legislation not only to give protection to those who need sign language support but to ensure that services and goods and, more importantly, access are available to members of our deaf community. So, yes, we will look at Scotland and at the Scandinavian countries, but we will go as far as Australia and New Zealand. We will go as far as we can to look at examples of other legislatures to ensure that we have the best possible legislation for our deaf constituents and deaf families.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for her comprehensive statement. I was not meant to be in the Chamber; I just happened to be sitting here. I am glad that she brought up Emma and Patrick, because it was my office that Emma contacted in May 2013. I have to say "Thank you" to the Minister and her Department, because, as soon as I contacted the Minister, she set up a meeting straight away with the Department. She understood straight away the need for Emma to converse with her son. I appreciate the work that was done there, and I am sure that the Minister will agree with me not only as the Minister but as a parent that it is essential that parents who have deaf children are able to converse with them at the earliest stage so that they have the best chance in life.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I agree with the Member and thank her for the work that she did to support Emma, Patrick and the entire family. It is really important, as I saw at first hand in January. Any parent, grandparent or other family member will appreciate and enjoy the communication that they have with family members — and that is for hearing family members. I can only imagine how important communication is for those, particularly children, who are deaf. It is really important. Communication is how we all evolve and develop as individuals. Without the support, I can only imagine how difficult it has been, particularly for generations of families who have been through this.

This is a good day. Karen McKeivitt was right that it is a proud day for the Assembly. We are all going forward collectively to recognise that there have been gaps in the past, to have those gaps filled and to get the strongest and most robust legislation possible to ensure that those inequalities are confined to the past.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her statement. I apologise to the House for being late: I was at the ETI Committee, and the ETI Minister was in attendance.

The Minister talked in her answers about inequality. She will agree and has said in her statement that the inclusivity of these services across Northern Ireland is vital. How can

we ensure, when we come to the delivery of the services after the consultation, that inclusivity is the reality across the community and across the country?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member is right to point out that, first of all, it has to be inclusive. It must be inclusive, and, if legislation is passed and this becomes law — I hope that it will — I hope that people will be proactive and will try to embrace the way in which they can provide inclusion. That is very important to me, as it is important for all Members.

The consultation period is crucial, particularly for service providers, should they be in local government or in services or through the arm's-length bodies of my Department and other Departments. Where our Departments have a public-facing element, we must ensure that the new legislation not only provides access but enables participation. It is important that that is done in a meaningful way that not only meets a legislative obligation but meets the obligation of the individual who may be accessing those services.

Ulster-Scots Academy/Irish Language Academy: Proposals

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. With your permission, I wish to make a statement to the House on the development of an Ulster-Scots academy and an Irish language academy.

Irish and Ulster Scots are key aspects of our cultural heritage and identity. Considering the legacy we have to deal with, it is unsurprising that many people see themselves as being 100% from one culture or the other. Of course, anyone who has visited the Public Record Office and delved into their family history will soon learn that it is often a lot more complicated than that. That is a strength. We have a range of cultures and heritages to draw from, all of which have their strengths and benefits. I encourage everyone to embrace this and draw from all areas of our culture to help define and create the future.

As an Executive, we are committed to tackling poverty and social exclusion. We want all our people to live happy and fulfilled lives. That means ensuring that they have access not only to the basics of life but to culture, heritage and tradition. Not only will that approach benefit individuals, but it will strengthen us as a society and enable future generations to experience and appreciate the unique culture that we have to offer.

However, it is not for politicians to suggest how a culture should develop. Our role is to ensure that there are networks, structures and organisations in place to facilitate its development and to ensure that our cultural roots remain accessible to all in our society.

12.15 pm

Today, I will set out how the work to develop an Ulster-Scots academy and an Irish language academy will be taken forward. I will speak first about the Ulster-Scots academy.

The idea for an Ulster-Scots academy first emerged into public view in the early 1990s. The Belfast Agreement in 1998 acknowledged the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity and made specific reference to Ulster Scots. Ulster Scots was recognised by the British Government in 2001 under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Other political imperatives include the joint declaration by the British and Irish Governments in 2003 and the St Andrew's Agreement in 2006, both of which gave a commitment that the British Government would take steps to encourage the establishment of an Ulster-Scots academy.

As Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, I have been very proactive in my support for Ulster-Scots culture and, specifically, the commitment in the Ulster-Scots strategy to establish an Ulster-Scots academy. That is why my Department, through the ministerial advisory group, invested nearly £4 million and has taken forward over 80 Ulster-Scots research and development projects.

On 25 January, I gave a written statement to the Assembly to update Members on the review by the ministerial advisory group of the Ulster-Scots academy and my decision not to extend the appointment of its chair and members beyond 31 December 2015.

I advised the Assembly that I had asked the Ulster-Scots Agency, working with my Department, to draft proposals to establish an Ulster-Scots academy, and I set up a programme board in my Department to assist with that work. Those decisions were based on the recommendations from a review of the ministerial advisory group, which was conducted by a member of the Strategic Investment Board.

The review commented positively on the significant contribution that the ministerial advisory group had made but concluded that it had taken its work as far as it could. I would like to state publicly how much I appreciate the contribution that the group made. The work undertaken by the ministerial advisory group will be of lasting value to the future of the Ulster-Scots academy.

I have now received the proposals from the Ulster-Scots Agency. In drafting them, the Ulster-Scots Agency consulted with key stakeholders in the Ulster-Scots sector. I am grateful to those stakeholders for their input.

The proposals are set in the context of the 'Strategy to Enhance and Develop the Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture 2015–2035'. The strategy sets out a framework for Ulster Scots over the next 20 years in a wide range of areas such as education, the media, use of Ulster Scots and public services. It also emphasises the tourism potential of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture and seeks to develop and maximise the social and economic benefits of that. The new academy will align closely to the strategy and also build upon the achievements of the ministerial advisory group. I am happy to accept the proposals as the basis for moving forward.

Based on the proposals, the Ulster-Scots academy will be known as the Ulster-Scots Institute and will be a not-for-profit company with charitable status. It will become part of the Ulster-Scots hub and will be located at the Corn Exchange in the Cathedral Quarter of Belfast. That is the most cost-effective location, as it will maximise opportunities for the sharing of resources with the Ulster-Scots Agency.

The institute will have a chair and voluntary board of directors who will be responsible for the effective corporate governance of the organisation. It will have a voluntary advisory council, comprising individuals with an interest in Ulster Scots and a relevant track record of research or writing to help shape the research priorities of the organisation, as well as expertise in organisation and community and economic and social development.

There will initially be seven core staff headed by a director. The core staff will be supplemented for the purpose of research by placement students and paid interns from local universities. For the purpose of lifelong learning, the staff will be supplemented by a bank of tutors, who will be engaged on a call-off basis to support the delivery of a programme of community education classes.

The institute's functions will relate to two strands, namely research and community engagement. It will not be a grant-awarding organisation. It will build on the knowledge base associated with Ulster Scots by undertaking research in relation to all aspects of Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage. It will circulate its research findings to a range of audiences through a variety of traditional and digital platforms. It will also foster interest in Ulster Scots

at community level through the delivery of lifelong learning opportunities such as workshops and accredited courses.

For it to be successful, its work must make a positive impact on the community at large. It will ensure that the focus of its work will not just be about physical outputs such as books, podcasts and television programmes but will have the potential to change society for the better with outcomes, and it will lead to a stronger community through the promotion of social inclusion and the creation of jobs and tourism initiatives that will generate an economic return.

There will be a schedule of priorities, focused on community engagement, which recognise the specific challenges of urban and rural areas, gender and age. The institute will be funded through the Ulster-Scots Agency, which will manage the funding through its existing robust governance arrangements. It will be funded for an initial period of three years, with continuation of funding subject to the successful delivery of set objectives.

We have listened to the Ulster-Scots sector, and it has identified the need for an organisation that can deliver its research independently, with academic rigour, and the freedom to plan for the long term. The role of the institute has been shaped to ensure that it complements and adds value to the work of the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Ulster-Scots Community Network. The research that the institute produces and the cultural products and programmes developed from that will become the foundations for its work, building an engaged community that can articulate the things that are important to it, affirming its identity and ready to share its culture with everyone.

I believe that these proposals represent the best way forward, and I expect the institute to be up and running by the end of this calendar year.

I am also pleased to tell Members that I gave approval to proceed with an Ulster-Scots Líoifa-style language and cultural development initiative on 18 December 2015. The first stage of the initiative — a series of 14 taster workshops across the North — is already under way. Seven workshops have taken place, and the rest will be delivered by the end of March. The initiative is being marketed under the Discover Ulster Scots brand.

I will now turn to the Irish language academy or, as it is known in Irish, an Gaelacadamh. Let me say that I support the passion and commitment that people from across the communities bring to learning Irish or Ulster Scots. Both have a rich and unique heritage that benefits everyone. We should work together to cherish and develop both languages and cultures in accordance with their needs.

The idea of an Irish language academy was first tabled by Foras na Gaeilge in 2006 in response to the increased demand to learn the language through adult learning and Irish-medium education. That created a clear need for the provision of Irish outside the traditional school environment. The launch of Líoifa in 2011 quickened the pace of growth. The great strength of adult learning of Irish has always been at community level. In the past few years, the development of the Irish language has been remarkable, but the accelerated growth has also resulted in many gaps in provision and a complex set of needs, both social and economic. These developments lead me to conclude that the early establishment of an Irish language academy is a must-do.

In making this decision, I took due account of the responsibilities to the Irish language under the Belfast Agreement and articles 7 and 8 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Article 7 relates to the need to provide support for the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Irish and the promotion of study and research. Article 8, likewise, relates to professional and technical training in Irish, should there be reasonable demand for it. There is also a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education, as pointed out in the 2009 Department of Education review. Irish-medium education should be a continuum, with progression throughout levels of development. The Irish language academy can help to ensure that young people in Irish-medium education have uninterrupted access, from post-primary through to vocational training, through Irish.

I asked that a scoping and consultation exercise be carried out on the establishment of an academy. It considered how economic and social development and employment opportunities in relation to the Irish language could be developed, together with adult learning, within the framework of the Irish language academy. I wanted the consultation to scope out the attitude to, and the awareness and perceptions of, an Irish language academy. Irish language development must be sustainable. Therefore, I asked for practical and deliverable recommendations that have Irish language community and stakeholder understanding and buy-in. I also asked that the scoping and consultation exercise build upon and update a 2013 feasibility study on the Irish language academy, taking account of many important recent developments.

The scoping exercise consulted a range of organisations and individuals in the sector and was coupled with rigorous interviewing techniques. It built on the previous Irish language feasibility study, which had involved other relevant stakeholders. That maximised the impact and sectoral inclusiveness of the research process. I am very satisfied with the consultation process and the overall approach. It has proven very effective in assessing current provision and in developing robust sustainable recommendations for the Irish language academy. I extend my thanks to everyone who engaged so comprehensively with the consultation. The consultation process found that there are large gaps in current provision, especially in the areas of teaching and learning resources, accreditation structures, vocational courses aimed at ages 16-plus, and adult teacher training and support.

I now turn to the specific recommendations. There should be provision of a Gaelacadamh in a central location, with a large consensus on the Gaeltacht Quarter as the location. Moneys should be used to create resources for use across the North. There should be a specific role for Gaelchúrsaí, the Irish-medium vocational training provider. The roles, responsibilities and leadership role of the academy should be clearly set out. Progression routes for a new generation of learners, as well as mechanisms for ensuring cooperation between providers and sharing best practice, should be put in place.

Today, I am accepting the outcome of the scoping and consultation exercise. I accept, subject to further work being undertaken, all six recommendations. I am satisfied that, taken together, the recommendations provide a

practical and deliverable basis for going forward with an Irish language academy and have the required level of Irish language community and stakeholder understanding and buy-in.

I am satisfied that the recommendations, when implemented, will form the necessary basis and framework for an academy that will ensure the delivery of consistent high-quality adult learning in Irish that is viable and sustainable; is fully in accord with the community focus and the economic and social regeneration and employment aims that I have set for the academy; can play a key role in reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion; will provide a high-quality training experience for young people and ensure that adequate pathways are available to progress to further study and employment through the Irish language; and align closely with my Department's policies and strategies on Irish language development, including the 2015-2035 strategy, to enhance and protect the Irish language and the action plan commitments to the Ceathrú Gaeltachta.

The key issues and recommendations drawn from the research and analysis in the scoping exercise will inform the values and delivery of the academy during its early years. In line with practice, the Irish language academy will now be taken forward through normal business case procedures. The various elements of the academy, including the academic focus on high-quality adult learning and the community focus on economic and social regeneration and employment, will be subject to competitive tendering. Resources have been set aside for 2016-17 to ensure that this is taken forward.

In conclusion, I hope that this statement is seen for what it is: a declaration of my clear commitment to the continued support of Ulster-Scots and Irish language culture in the future. By developing, understanding and sharing the range of cultures that we are lucky enough to have, we can only enhance communities and build a thoroughly modern and compassionate society.

Mr McCausland (The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): I thank the Minister for her statement. A lot of issues will probably require further exploration, but will she tell us how much in revenue and capital funds have been allocated for each of the two initiatives over the next three years?

12.30 pm

Secondly, is there not an inequality in the case of the Irish language academy, which will be based in the Gaeltacht Quarter and will, therefore, probably be a social economy-type initiative, whereby the money is recycled back into the sector because they will own the building, whereas because the Ulster-Scots Institute is relocating to the hub, that means that money will be paid out of the system to the developer who owns the building.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Finally, I have heard references of her promoting the idea of a James Connolly interpretive centre. Can she assure us that it is in no way connected to the Irish language academy, or with Forbairt Feirste, which will probably be doing the Irish language project?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will take the Member's last point first. The promotion of the James Connolly interpretive centre, or

indeed the Somme Centre, will in no way be connected to the Ulster-Scots Institute or the Gaelacadamh — the Irish language academy. On revenue, the imbalance is skewed in favour of the Ulster-Scots Institute. Over £1 million of revenue will be dedicated to the staff over the next three years. On the Gaelacadamh, it is probably less than £150,000 per year, but there will be money for the purchase and refurbishment of a building once a successful business case has been completed.

The Member knows that I have encouraged the Ulster-Scots community to identify a cultural hub, and, in fact, I encouraged them to use the Oldpark Library, which I was prepared to gift them. It was not suitable, and they have since looked at other venues that were not suitable, but the offer is still open.

I totally agree with the Member that it would be much better for social and economic regeneration; not only would they own their own premises, but that would help to sustain and replenish the Ulster-Scots Institute. So, that offer is still there. I know that the arrangements for rent are probably contractual, but they could use that time to start looking at a more preferred option. I encourage the Member to use his influence, and for others to do likewise.

This is a good day for the Ulster-Scots Institute and for the Irish language academy, because it shows the Assembly supporting the work of two strong cultural entities that together will — and they have, and do, work together — provide a legacy of support for generations to come.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I ask the Minister to provide details of what assurance there will be to ensure that the work of the institute is of good quality.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have complete confidence that the new institute, as it is now known, will build upon the robust leadership and governance of support of the Ulster-Scots Agency, which I believe is what I have said it to be, and will involve the network, and, indeed, other Members who may have been involved with the ministerial advisory group. It will be subject to the scrutiny of my Department, based on assurance reports from the Ulster-Scots Agency. More importantly, it will be based on the needs of the sector itself. In the past, attempts were made to do it, but there were missed opportunities. I believe that the institute will now put its best foot forward and bring forward proposals and suggestions that are reflective of the needs there. Once they are brought forward, they will be promoted and proposed by the Ulster-Scots Agency and scrutinised and made accountable by my Department.

Mrs McKeivitt: I was going to ask the Minister how close we are to seeing the production of dictionaries for both languages, but then I noticed that there was a difference. I ask her to explain why the Ulster-Scots Institute should proceed as a not-for-profit company with charitable status, while the same does not apply to the Irish language academy. Perhaps she might answer both questions.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will take the Member's last question first. The Ulster-Scots Institute will be taken forward because it is completely new. It is important that we set out the governance arrangements and its legal and charitable status from the very outset.

The Gaelacadamh — the Irish language academy — is to be done by the secretariat for the Gaeltacht Quarter, which

is Forbairt Feirste. It has a proven track record not only of delivering and leading on the Gaeltacht Quarter plan but in its own right. It has charitable status and all its articles and memorandums, so everything is in place. It has a proven track record, as does the Ulster-Scots Agency. It was clear, because the institute is completely new, that I would set out the structures on which it would be governed and developed.

I have asked the question about the dictionaries since coming into the Department. For Ulster Scots, the answer is simply that there has never been agreement in the Ulster-Scots community. There is a summary. Public money was spent on delivering a summary or a glossary of terms, but I believe that the institute will be looking to bring forward a dictionary. There is none at the minute.

Regarding the dictionary for the Irish language, Foras na Gaeilge has spent millions of pounds of public money, so it needs to be published. In my opinion, if it is not published this year, it will lose all credibility. I believe that, when groups on the ground are struggling and there is the notion that additional public money from this Government and the Irish Government is being ploughed into a dictionary project that people cannot see an outcome to, it will not be given the support that it has received unless it is published by the end of this year.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for her statement. Both bodies are treated alike, in the sense that we expect social inclusion, the creation of jobs, tourism initiatives and economic returns. Will you flesh that out a wee bit for us?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I hope that I am wrong on this, but the Member is almost pointing out what they are expected to do, as if they cannot do it. They are already doing it. They are already providing economic tourism potential, but we need to develop that. We certainly need to develop it more around the points that the Committee Chair mentioned on ownership of the project, ownership of the building, economic sustainability and the potential for regenerating not only the community but projects in it. The institute and the Gaelacadamh are important in that regard. They are doing it at different levels now, but we need to ensure that they are given as much support as possible to do more of it.

They need to demonstrate what impact they have had on each community and across communities. The challenge is theirs. I believe that I have done a lot of the heavy lifting. The communities are ready for this. They have been involved in the processes over a period of years and in recent months. The tell me that they can do it and that they want to do it. They need our support to do it. We have set out that stall today.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for her statement. The higher and further education sectors have suffered severe cuts to their budgets, so much so that the University of Ulster had to axe the whole of its languages department. How can the Minister justify the economic case for the creation of the two academies?

Ms Ní Chuilín: First, her party colleague the Minister for Employment and Learning made the decision to cut language courses; I did not. I want to get that on the record. Secondly, the main priority is that we ensure that these communities are not further disadvantaged. There already have been cuts to programmes on the Irish language: I want to ensure that that does not become a trend. Apart from anything else and more importantly, both communities, the Gaelacadamh and the Ulster-Scots

Institute have, with limited budgets, identified needs, and they will do so in the future with limited budgets. I can proudly stand over my statements. More importantly, the obligation to set up both academies was set out in agreements going back over a decade. It is unacceptable that from then until now we have established neither an institute nor a Gaelacadamh. I regret that Minister Farry has made his decisions, but I will not let his lack of vision stop me progressing for the two communities.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her statement. I welcome the creation of the Ulster-Scots hub, but I share the view of my colleague from North Belfast that the Ulster-Scots academy needs to be community-centred as a resource to build capacity and competency in that community.

I see that the structure for the Ulster-Scots academy is set out clearly in the Minister's statement. I want to ask the Minister about the Irish academy. Where will it be centred? What will its structure be? How much will be spent on the development of that academy as it goes forward?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Yours are quite similar to the questions asked by your colleague from North Belfast. I repeat: the structure that was set out for the institute was based on the work of the Ulster-Scots Agency. If that changes, it will be done with the approval of the Department for Communities. I anticipate that the structure that is out there at the minute will be built on, particularly by people in the community.

We are using Forbairt Feirste for the Gaelacadamh because it is the secretariat for the Gaeltacht Quarter plan. That will be built on as well.

I cannot go in and develop an Ulster-Scots hub. I have tried. I have offered premises and support. It is not my fault that the community did not identify somewhere else. Rather than waiting for that to happen — if we were to wait for that to happen in the same way as we are waiting for a dictionary to come forward, it would not happen — we identified Corn Exchange as a cultural hub. I encourage people to see it as a temporary arrangement and to use the time until the leases are up to identify other places that they can own and claim as their own and where they can provide economic and regeneration opportunities. It is not my fault that the community did not do that. I encourage Members from your party and, indeed, your community to give as much support as possible and create the demand and need. Once that is done, I anticipate that the Department would give its support.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an dá ráiteas seo ag an Aire inniu agus molaim iad. I welcome both statements from the Minister today and commend them.

An dtig liom a fhiafraí den Aire cad é mar a bheidh an Gaelacadamh ábalta caighdeán acadúil a ardú agus díriú isteach ar riachtanais áitiúla? Can the Minister tell me how the Gaelacadamh will combine academic standards with a focus on local needs and community needs?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. It is important because, I think, the first piece of work that was done, particularly around the Gaelacadamh, was done with an academic approach with nothing for the vocational end of it. An element of academia is needed, certainly to look at standards, as the Member has mentioned, that go right

across the board, so that, in theory, you should be able to go to an Irish class anywhere and get the same standard regardless of where you go without having to rely on brilliant múinteoirí, teachers or whoever the tutor may be.

One of the gaps that has been missing is due to the lack of support, particularly at the vocational level and for groups like Gaelchúrsaí, through higher and further education. There is a big, growing gap out there, particularly for children and young people and even for adult returners to education. That needs to be met. That gap is getting wider instead of decreasing. Given the question posed by Anna Lo about how this could be justified, this is more reason for doing it. When it came to looking at what cuts to make, it seemed that the Irish language was the first place that people went to. We need to correct that. There have been exercises through consultation, feasibility studies, engagements and interviews that have been used to determine what the needs are. The Ulster-Scots Institute and the Gaelacadamh will go forward on the basis of evidence and need from the community and processes for both. That is the best way that we can do this and build on that experience and on the developing and emerging needs as we go forward.

Mr McCarthy: First of all, the Minister might want to retract her statement trying to blame our colleague for the reduction of language services in the university. As I understand it, it was a decision made by the university, not by the Minister.

In her statement, the Minister said that the idea of an Ulster-Scots academy was first mooted in 1990. I can recall, about that time, when there was property either rented or purchased in Newtownards. It lay idle for a long time — God knows how long — because there was no support for such an activity.

What guarantee does the Minister offer that the latest proposal will not be yet another drain on very scarce resources?

12.45 pm

Ms Ní Chuilín: First of all, let me clarify my position. I know that some in the Member's party are in denial about the deficit of our Budget as a result of the erosion of the block grant by the Tory party. It is not political rhetoric; it is true. The erosion of the block grant and the decisions that each of the Departments had to take have been made. You are right: the university made the decision, but it made it on the basis of money. I believe the university made the wrong decision and that there needed to be leadership from a Minister, regardless of how their grant was affected, to make decisions. I have done it in my Department, and other Ministers needed to do the same thing.

I also met the Member's colleague on Gaelchúrsa, and I was absolutely shocked at the lack of support that was given to that community, particularly for children and young people. However, I do not know and do not remember the premises that the Member is talking about, but I accept what he is saying and that that is his perception.

I saw other Members nodding their heads. A decision was made to purchase or to rent or lease a building that was not used. I want to ensure that that does not happen here. That is why we agreed to the Corn Exchange. It is down to Members right across the Chamber, not just within the DUP, to ensure that they give proper leadership and do not nitpick or cherry-pick around the Ulster-Scots Institute and

Gaelacadamh to make sure that they meet the needs of the community and the people whom we all serve, rather than the needs of some political parties.

Mr Humphrey: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. My North Belfast colleague Nelson McCausland and I directly asked the Minister about the level of funding that will be put in to the new Irish language academy, and the Minister failed to answer those questions. Is that good enough in this House?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): It is at the discretion of the Minister to give the answers. It is not for me to make a judgement on that.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to that point of order, a LeasCheann Comhairle, I mentioned it, but maybe because the Member was late or maybe was not listening —

Mr Humphrey: I was here.

Ms Ní Chuilín: OK; let me repeat it. The Ulster-Scots Institute will receive over £1 million in revenue, and, when it comes forward with its robust proposal for premises and on the basis of an economic appraisal and business case, that will be considered. It did not do it in the past —

Mr Humphrey: The Irish language is what I am talking about.

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Irish language will get less than £150,000 a year. When the proposals for premises are brought forward, which they have been, they will be considered. So, it is much less than the Ulster-Scots Institute has got thus far. That has answered your question. The difficulty with the Member is that, like previous answers, he got an answer to his question, but he just does not like the answer that he got.

Mr Humphrey: You did not answer it.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Yes, I did.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order, please. That was not a point of order, but I am sure the Member and the Minister are happy that they got their very strong views on the record on the final day of this Assembly. That concludes questions on the statement.

Executive Committee Business

Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be affirmed.

This debate is the first of two that will be held today to complete the statutory processes needed to accomplish the reduction in the number of Departments promised in the Stormont House Agreement and reaffirmed in the Fresh Start document.

In the months since the completion of the Fresh Start Agreement in November last year, the legislation needed to reduce the number of Departments from 12 to nine and to realign functions has been progressed and is now almost complete. The Departments Act needed to establish the statutory framework for the nine-Department model was passed in this Assembly on 2 February, and the First Minister and deputy First Minister have since made a commencement order to bring its operative provisions into effect from 8 May 2016, shortly after the election.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister have also made a transfer of functions order to reallocate statutory responsibilities between the nine Departments. The purpose of the motion before Members today is to have that order affirmed by the Assembly, as required by the Departments (NI) Order 1999, which is the parent legislation for the transfer of functions order.

The making of the order and its affirmation by the Assembly are essential to the restructuring process. The purpose of the order is to transfer statutory functions from one Department to another so that the allocation of departmental responsibilities after the election reflects the finalised arrangements in appendix F5 of the 'Fresh Start' document. The nine future Departments after the election will incorporate all the powers, functions and services of their 12 predecessors. No functions are done away with, and no policies are terminated, as a consequence of restructuring.

Reform of the structures of government here has been an issue for a long time. There has been a commitment in the Programme for Government to agree changes to the structures that will apply in the next mandate, and, in 2012, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee produced a report on the reduction in the number of Departments. In 2014, the Stormont House Agreement contained a commitment to a nine-Department model being established in time for the 2016 election, with the future allocation of departmental functions to be agreed by the parties.

The Executive discussed departmental restructuring on several occasions in the early months of last year and decided on the names and responsibilities of the future Departments. On 2 March last year, those decisions were announced to the Assembly by the former First Minister. The allocation of functions was further refined during the talks process that led to the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan last November. The final allocation of functions was set out in appendix F5 of the 'Fresh Start' document. The Departments Bill was introduced in the Assembly shortly after that.

Throughout 2015, a scoping exercise was conducted across the Departments to identify existing statutory functions in primary legislation that might need to be transferred. That was a complex undertaking, and the work required careful checking by legal advisers. However, completion of the task before the end of 2015 enabled a draft transfer of functions order reflective of the future departmental responsibilities as set out in appendix F5 of the 'Fresh Start' document to be prepared and issued for scrutiny by the Committee for OFMDFM in January.

Officials briefed the Committee on the purpose and content of the order in late January. We are grateful to the Committee for its urgent work in considering the order, and to the other statutory Committees that contributed to the process. We acknowledge the pressure that the Committee had to face given the limited time frame available. I am pleased to say that the Committee's report to the Department, which we received on 11 February, advised that it was content for the order to be made.

I would like to briefly explain the structure of the transfer of functions order. Article 1 cites its title and provides for its coming into operation to coincide with the operative date of the Departments Act (NI) 2016. Article 2 contains definitions of a number of terms used in the order, key amongst those being that "transfer date" means the date on which section 1 of the Departments Act comes into operation, and that will be 8 May 2016.

The substantive part of the order is organised by reference to the six Departments from which statutory functions are transferring, and schedules 1 to 5 are further subdivided by reference to the future Departments that will receive those functions. Where a significant part of a dissolving Department is transferring to one future Department, there is no need to specify all transferring functions. Articles 9 and 10 of the order provide for the continuity of legislation, documents, legal proceedings and other activities and for the transfer of assets and liabilities. Finally, article 11 references schedule 6, which contains necessary amendments to legislation needed to give effect to the transfers.

With the Executive's agreement, the order was made on 25 February by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly in exercise of powers conferred by article 8 of the Departments (NI) Order 1999. However, it can only have effect if it is affirmed by the Assembly, and, in line with article 1, it will come into operation on 8 May, shortly after the election. The order is an essential part of the restructuring process and is a natural complement to the Departments Act passed by the Assembly just last month. It is vital that the order is affirmed if we are to achieve the timetable for restructuring set in the Stormont House Agreement and realise the benefits of a more streamlined and efficient Administration. I commend the motion to the Assembly and request that the order be affirmed.

Mr Lyttle (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, perhaps you will first grant me an opportunity to respond to devastating news reaching the Assembly that a prison officer from my constituency has died further to the evil terrorist attack on his life on 4 March. I take this opportunity to send my heartfelt and deepest sympathy to the family and loved ones of this brave man and my support to his colleagues, who work courageously to serve every member of this community to keep us safe. This Assembly and our entire

community must redouble our support for prison officers and the heroic work that they do, and we must isolate the men and women of violence who are involved in this. Finally, I call on anyone with information to search their conscience and soul and provide the PSNI with the information needed to ensure that the evil intent of these men and women does not prevail in our community. I thank you for the opportunity to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Trying to move on, I rise to speak on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order. I thank the junior Minister for her opening remarks on the motion.

At its meeting on 30 November, junior Ministers briefed the Committee on the need for accelerated passage for the Departments Bill. While the Bill set out the high-level framework for the nine-Department model, members heard that the reallocation of the statutory functions is provided for in the order that we debate today.

At that meeting, the junior Ministers committed themselves to work with the Committee on its consideration of the order. Although that commitment was welcomed, members were of a view that, due to time pressures, the opportunity to scrutinise the policy proposals in the order was likely to be limited. The Committee therefore wrote to the other Committees early in December to ask for their views on the proposed transfer of functions. We agreed to ask Committees for details of their consultation with, or representations from, stakeholders.

The Committee was briefed by OFMDFM officials in January on the restructuring of the new Executive Office. We wrote to relevant OFMDFM arm's-length bodies to seek their views on the proposed transfer of functions relating to OFMDFM. The Strategic Investment Board, the Planning Appeals Commission and the Victims and Survivors Service indicated agreement. The Children's Commissioner expressed concern that sponsorship of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People would fall to the Department of Education, which will have responsibility for services and policies that impact on children's lives. The commissioner believes that that may compromise the commission's independence.

The OFMDFM Committee received a briefing on the policy proposals in the order on 27 January 2016. Following the meeting, a draft of the order was issued to all Committees for information and consideration. On 10 February, the Committee noted the responses received from Committees. Most were content with the proposed transfers, although concerns were raised, for example, on organisational structures of new Departments, the relative weight that may be given to some functions in new Departments and the risk of a diminished voice. The OFMDFM Committee therefore recommended that a short, focussed review of the transfer of functions should be undertaken six months after the order comes into operation. That, we believe, will provide an opportunity to assess the efficiency of the new arrangements and identify adjustments that may be required.

The OFMDFM Committee formally considered the order on 2 March 2016 and, notwithstanding the points that we raised, agreed that it should be affirmed by the Assembly.

Speaking as an Alliance MLA, we as a party have supported reform of the Executive and Assembly,

rationalisation of Departments, the reduction in the number of MLAs, the creation of an opposition, a voluntary coalition and an end to sectarian designation. As an Alliance MLA, therefore, I support the transfer of functions. However, I have concerns about the extent of the consultation that was possible in the time frame that we were given, and I support the Committee's call to ensure that there is a short focus review of the new arrangements.

1.00 pm

As a party, we have concerns that the Employment Service is being placed in the Department for Communities rather than the Department for the Economy. We have ongoing concerns that civil law remains split between Health, Justice and Finance. The Alliance Party fought to ensure that "Environment" was given named recognition in the departmental title, and we hope that environmental protection continues to be a priority of that new Department.

I also have concerns about key strategies that will cross from one Department to another in the new mandate — for example, the important childcare strategy, given the increasing costs that many of our families face, community relations and social investment. I sincerely hope that the new Departments are able to transition and deliver on those arrangements as smoothly as possible.

Mr Frew: I rise to support the Transfer of Functions Order. It is a good day that we are at this point. I know that this is a mechanism to deliver the statutory requirements for the transfer of functions to the new nine Departments. As someone who never really supported the set-up of 12 Departments, I believe that this is a good day. It will lead to better efficiencies and cohesion, but I plant a warning that the Ministers who are involved in the new Executive will be vital to the delivery of anything good and fresh that may come out of this move. I believe that we need to get away from the silo mindset. We need to be more cohesive and all going in one direction, which, as parties, we have failed to do collectively over the last term and beyond. I stand here with a hope that that will change as politics evolve and mature in this place. That can be only a good thing for the people whom we all serve in Northern Ireland.

I look forward to the day when, hopefully, we will see an opposition, which will lead not only to a more respectable opposition, not necessarily leaving it all to the Committees, but to a more streamlined government and Executive. That will further help to drive this country in one direction as opposed to five — now four — different directions. It is a very good day, and I understand the points that Chris Lyttle made.

It would be remiss of me not to echo Chris Lyttle's remarks regarding the atrocious terrorist attack that has taken the life of a brave prison officer. I echo everything that Mr Chris Lyttle said, and I hope that the House will stand up in the face of evil terrorism.

Mr Attwood: I entirely endorse and agree with the comments made by the last two Members on the terrible news that the prison officer who was attacked recently has died. There seemed to be some sense that the prison officer was in the process of recovery, and to hear this news in the last few minutes makes a terrible situation appear even worse. The sympathy of our party and, no doubt, everybody in the House goes to his family, his

colleagues and the Prison Service generally. I concur with Mr Lyttle's comment that the single best response of every citizen is to share every single piece of information that they may have about this attack with the PSNI, and all should respond in that way.

Had there been an opportunity to amend the order before the House today, the SDLP would have sought to amend it because there appear to be tensions in the proposals on the transfer of functions. I do not think that this is the day to elaborate greatly on that matter, but I ask the junior Minister to respond to two points that represent the issues that the SDLP would have elaborated on had there been a better procedure in that regard.

The first point is that functions are being transferred from FM and DFM to the new Departments, but not every function is being transferred. On the face of it, that creates a tension. On the one hand, for example — unless I am very much in error, and I do not think that I am — responsibility for older people and children is being transferred to another Department, but the power to appoint the respective commissioners of the two statutory bodies is retained by FM and DFM. Here we have a situation where the function is transferred but the power of appointment is retained. The function is transferred in its totality, and the expertise, the staff, the specialism and the depth of knowledge will be in a different Department from the Department that appoints. Unless I am in error, that looks incongruous. Surely the power of appointment should fall to the Department that has exclusive responsibility for the function, but that is not to be the case. In this instance, the power of appointment is to be retained by FM and DFM. I ask the junior Minister to explain why that is the case. There have been occasions during the last two mandates when the issue of appointment by FM and DFM has become a matter of some tension. There were questions raised about a number of appointments of victims' commissioners over the last decade, and some would say that questions were raised about one or two appointments in other areas. Why retain the power of appointment when you transfer in totality all the other powers on those matters to another Department?

The second issue is that it is one thing to transfer function; it is another matter to retain function but transfer responsibility. The reason I make that point is that there is an event upstairs at the moment at which the fullest range of victims and survivors' groups are putting forward proposals on, for example, models of compensation for those subjected to institutional abuse or clerical abuse outside the institutions and those who had experiences in mother-and-baby homes. The people of great authority and very harsh experience who are in the Building are here in the context of FM and DFM retaining the functions in respect of victims and survivors, and yet, two or three weeks ago, it was decided in the Executive to transfer to the Department of Health the responsibility for scoping out what may or may not happen in respect of those who were subjected to clerical abuse and those who lived in mother-and-baby homes. I suggest that the Minister might want to explain why, when we are going through the elaborate exercise of reducing the number of Departments and reconfiguring their functions, the responsibility for further scoping out the issue of victims and survivors is devolved to the Department of Health while the function is retained by FM and DFM. It is another example, I suggest, of something that, on the face of it, looks incongruous.

I might have wished to elaborate on other matters, but, given the limitations on what we can do on this motion and given other news, I leave it there.

Mr Allen: Like other Members who have spoken, I would like to convey to the family of the prison officer who has died following the heinous attack on 4 March my deepest sympathies. My thoughts are with them. We must do everything as a society to bring those responsible to justice and take them off the street. They are not representative of the wider community in Northern Ireland.

This is important legislation. The current system of Departments was established in 1998. No one claims that it was the perfect or optimum system, but it was of its time, and, for the most part, it has served us well. However, most things in life should be subject to scrutiny and monitoring with a view to updating and improving, and how we conduct the business of government should be no different.

Departments exist to deliver for the people they serve. What the people of Northern Ireland want is a system of government that delivers for them, their families and their communities. They are not obsessed with the number of Departments or what names they are given; they want to see results. A reduction in the number of Departments offers the prospect of more effective and efficient government. That is to be welcomed. It is essential that we foster and develop a culture of joined-up government and break down the silo mentality, which, as others have mentioned, has been the hallmark of too many ministerial decisions. So many issues cut across departmental responsibilities and require a cross-departmental response. In a political system where one party or perhaps a two-party coalition governs, that can present challenges when Ministers from the same party jealously guard departmental budgets and responsibilities; in a system such as ours, where multi-party coalitions have been the norm, cross-departmental working can be extremely difficult to achieve. That is something that all parties and Departments must strive to address. After all, we are all here to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland. Their health, education and employment prospects are what all of us should be concerned with.

The revised Departments motion is not perfect. It represents the biggest challenge to administration here in 17 years. There are already concerns at some of the functions being transferred from one Department to another and doubts as to whether they are in the most appropriate location. For example, I am aware of concerns that unemployment is included in the Department for Communities and not the Department for the Economy. I am also aware that there are concerns over some of the functions retained by the renamed OFMDFM. The Ulster Unionist Party therefore wants to see a review mechanism built in to identify and address any unforeseen problems that may arise as the new departmental responsibilities and functions roll out. We should not be precious if problems are identified and changes need to be made.

Ms J McCann: Before I conclude, I will reiterate what other colleagues have said. I express my party's condolences and sympathies to the family of the prison officer who has died. I reiterate that the people who carried out that attack do not represent the community. If anyone has any information, it should be passed to the PSNI.

I am grateful to Members for their contributions. As I indicated at the outset and as has been said in the Assembly during debates on the Departments Act, reform of our institutional structures is a long-standing issue. Reducing the number of Departments has long been recognised as a key element of reform. With the passing of the Departments Act last month and the making of the transfer of functions order, we are close to realising that reform.

1.15 pm

The Assembly endorsed the nine-Department structure for the future Executive when it passed the Departments Bill, and there is now broad consensus on the allocation of functions to Departments under the new model. Together, the Departments Act 2016 and the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order 2016 create a framework for the most extensive reorganisation of departmental systems since 1999. The establishment of a streamlined nine-Department system in May will provide opportunities for improving the way in which we do business. It will enable productive synergy to be achieved from the outset of the mandate.

I will now take the time to respond to some of the issues that Members brought up. The Deputy Chair, Mr Chris Lyttle, mentioned the consultation with the Committee. We would have preferred to have spent a longer period on it, but we did not have a lot of time in which to bring it forward.

Mr Attwood mentioned that some appointments functions will remain in OFMDFM in its new form. Those functions have been retained so as to maintain a sense of independence. You will be aware that OFMDFM is a joint office, in which the First Minister and the deputy First Minister act in a joint capacity. That helps ensure that important and high-profile offices have the support of the broader community. That is one of the reasons that those functions will remain there.

He also mentioned victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse. I hosted today's event on redress in my capacity as a party MLA. One of the reasons that the scoping papers on clerical abuse and on mother and baby homes have been anchored in the Department of Health is because the Safeguarding Board is part of that Department. The board has the necessary skills and expertise and is able to take a more sensitive approach when looking at such issues.

Mr Attwood: Will the junior Minister give way?

Ms J McCann: Yes.

Mr Attwood: The junior Minister said that, when it came to appointments, it was necessary for some public appointments to have cross-community support. If that is the logic that she is deploying, I suggest that those who believe in that argument should bring proposals forward so as to do the exact same for all appointments made by the Justice Minister. The House appoints the Justice Minister on the basis of what? Cross-community support. If you believe that that office requires cross-community support, given the importance of so many of the persons nominated by the Justice Minister's powers — to the Probation Board, the Policing Board and the Judicial Appointments Commission — why is there not a need for cross-community support for those very sensitive matters? If you believe that there is a need for cross-community support for some matters, why do you not apply that logic and have OFMDFM appoint people to those sorts of posts? If that

is the logic of your assertion, why do you not follow that logic through and apply it in other places? If you do not apply it in other places, why do you reserve that power to OFMDFM?

Ms J McCann: The Member will be well aware of the issues around the appointment of the Justice Minister. I am not here to go into all that. There have, however, been examples of splits having taken place between the appointment and sponsorship roles for the Equality Commission, the Police Ombudsman and other offices.

Finally, I thank Members for their contributions to the debate and for the questions and issues that they raised. A leaner, more joined-up Administration, with improved cohesion in and between Departments is in all our interests and will be this Assembly's legacy to the next mandate.

Assembly affirmation of the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order is a necessary part of the process. I therefore ask the Assembly to approve the motion.

Notice taken that 10 Members were not present.

House counted, and, there being fewer than 10 Members present, the Deputy Speaker ordered the Division Bells to be rung.

Upon 10 Members being present —

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be affirmed.

Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That the Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016 be approved.

This motion is the final statutory process that the Assembly needs to take to achieve a reduction in the number of Departments and a smaller Executive after the May election. The determination is a formal document required under section 17 of the NI Act 1998. The First Minister and the deputy First Minister must make a new determination when an Act of the Assembly establishes a new Department or dissolves an existing one. As the Assembly has recently passed the Departments Act 2016, which will dissolve three existing Departments, a fresh determination will be needed.

The determination provides the basis on which the departmental Ministers will be appointed at the start of the next mandate under the d'Hondt system for most Ministers and by Assembly vote for the Minister of Justice. The determination was signed by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on 1 March, and we now seek the Assembly's approval with cross-community support. It sets out the titles of the eight future departmental Ministers and their functions in the Departments that they will take charge of. The First Minister and the deputy First Minister and the future Executive Office are not listed because they are provided for separately in primary legislation. The same formula has been used in the two previous determinations in 1999, and in 2010 when the Department of Justice was established.

This does not change the status of existing departmental Ministers for the time being. They will remain in post until election day on 5 May, in line with section 16A of the NI Act. The determination, if approved today, will not take effect until the first meeting of the next Assembly in the week following the election on 5 May. The Departments Act 2016 and the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order 2016 will have come into effect over the intervening weekend, giving legal authority to the names of the future Departments and establishing their statutory functions.

That approach will align with the arrangements in the Westminster Bill, which extends the time available for agreeing the Programme for Government in advance of the appointment of Ministers. There was a commitment in the Stormont House Agreement to extend the time available for that negotiation from seven to 14 days. The Westminster Bill will disapply the requirement in Standing Orders for d'Hondt to be run within seven days of a determination coming into effect but only if it takes effect during the period starting with the first meeting of the new Assembly. The commencement provision in the determination therefore gives greater flexibility to party leaders to negotiate the next Programme for Government before the appointment of Ministers. The determination is a significant document that will play an important role in the creation of future, more compact Executives. Its importance is acknowledged by the requirement for cross-community support.

The Assembly already passed the Departments Act, which establishes that future nine-Department system.

It just affirmed the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order, which reallocates statutory responsibilities between Departments, and it can now put the final piece in place by approving the determination, which will give titles to future Ministers and assign them departmental responsibilities. That will complete the statutory requirement to fulfil the commitment in the Stormont House Agreement that was reaffirmed in the Fresh Start Agreement — the commitment to a reduction in the number of Departments to nine in time for the 2016 Assembly election.

Debates on the Departments Act showed that there is general support for a more streamlined departmental system and a smaller Executive. We look forward to seeing that in operation in the next mandate. The approval of the determination will be an important step towards that goal. I commend the motion to the Assembly and urge that the determination be approved with the necessary cross-community support.

Mr Lyttle (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I will speak very briefly on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016. As the junior Minister outlined, the determination before us today will form the basis for filling ministerial offices in the next Assembly mandate. It reflects the ministerial positions following the restructuring of the Northern Ireland Departments to a nine-Department model. The Committee considered the determination at its meeting on 9 March and was content for it to be approved by the Assembly.

Mr Lyons: Before I address the determination, I add my voice to those who have already spoken to condemn what happened to the prison officer who was attacked on 4 March and who has subsequently died. We obviously all condemn what happened. It is good that that condemnation has taken place, because it did not always take place. It is important to remember that he was an individual with a family and that he will leave behind those who will miss him and who have loved him. It is a tragedy for them, and it is obviously right that, as an Assembly, we send our prayers and best wishes to his family and friends at this time and stand together and say that we utterly condemn what has happened, we find it utterly appalling and there was never any justification for taking the life of someone who was serving in that way. There is no justification for it taking place now, and there never will be any justification. Although other Members took the opportunity to express those sentiments, I think it is right that we all stand together and say it with one voice.

Moving on to what is before us, like Mr Lyttle, I will be brief. The Fresh Start Agreement obviously has the support of my party. There are a number of things within it that we want to see take place, and legislation is required for that to happen. We are getting towards the end of the process now, and it will require the determination to go through so that departmental responsibilities are properly allocated, Departments are created and the appropriate titles are given. The position of my party on the issue has been made very clear. All that is left to say is that we will support the determination.

1.30 pm

Mr Allen: This is a fairly modest piece of legislation before us today in size, but not in importance. It sets out the new ministerial offices and Departments due to come into effect in the new mandate. We support the creation of a more streamlined system of government at Stormont and wish to see services delivered in a more effective and efficient manner. A reduction in the number of Departments should help to achieve that. It is my opinion that the people we seek to serve are not obsessed with the number of Departments or what names they are given; they want to see results on the ground. That is what we should turn our attention to as we move into the new mandate.

Ms J McCann: I mentioned earlier that the determination is a formal document, but its approval is more than a mere formality. Without this determination coming into effect at the appropriate time, the Ministers of the future Executive will not have their legal titles and their responsibilities for their Departments will not be clearly set out. It is an important document constitutionally. That is why it requires cross-community support to be validly approved by the Assembly. It is the final step that this Assembly needs to take to prepare for the restructuring of the Executive Departments in May. The First Minister and deputy First Minister have made the appointed day order, which will dissolve three Departments and rename seven others on 8 May, shortly after the election. The transfer of functions order will come into force at the same time, reallocating the functions of Departments. This determination will then take effect at the first meeting of the new Assembly later that week, when Ministers will be appointed to a new Executive in the early weeks of the Assembly and will take responsibility for a streamlined nine-Department Administration with an agenda for action in an agreed Programme for Government.

We are coming to the end of a process that started with the last Programme for Government. It was the subject of a report by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee. It became a firm commitment in the Stormont House Agreement and was reaffirmed, with challenging deadlines, in the 'Fresh Start' document. This Assembly has met the deadlines. Thanks are due to the Assembly and its Committees, particularly the OFMDFM Committee, for the time and effort that it has invested in the process since last November. Beyond the Assembly, extensive preparatory work has been undertaken in Departments to make ready for restructuring. Everything suggests that the reform will be accomplished in May, with minimal disruption to public services and longer-term gains in efficiency. I urge the Assembly to endorse the motion and give its approval to the determination with the necessary cross-community support.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I remind Members that cross-community support is needed for this motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That the Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016 be approved.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): As there are no dissenting voices, the motion is duly passed.

Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill: Legislative Consent Motion

Mrs Pengelly (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That this Assembly agrees that the Westminster Parliament should consider the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February 2016, dealing with the power in clause 1(4) of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two members of the Independent Reporting Commission; and the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly contained in clause 9.

The Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February. It gives effect to a number of commitments contained in 'A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan'. It has now passed all its stages in the Commons with only minor amendment and awaits passage through the Lords. Subject to parliamentary approval, it is expected to obtain Royal Assent before the Assembly election on 5 May. I am conscious that representatives of the parties that take their seats in Westminster have already had the opportunity to debate and seek to influence the Bill overall, although most of the issues raised there relate to excepted matters, which are the Secretary of State's responsibility and are therefore outside the terms of this motion.

The majority of the provisions in the Bill deal with matters that are excepted or reserved to the Westminster Parliament and, therefore, do not require an LCM. There are, however, two provisions that do require an LCM as they place new responsibilities on Northern Ireland Ministers. In the interests of efficiency, it was considered sensible for these provisions to be included in the Westminster Bill rather than be detached and progressed, perhaps to a different timescale, through Assembly legislation.

The first is the power for the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two of the four members of the Independent Reporting Commission. The commission will be established and sponsored by the United Kingdom and Irish Governments and will have the overarching objective of promoting progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland. Clause 1(4) of the Bill enables the First Minister and deputy First Minister, jointly, to nominate two of the four commissioners, with the other two to be nominated separately by the United Kingdom Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

The second set of provisions requiring an LCM concerns the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly and is contained in clause 9. These provisions will introduce greater transparency into the budgetary process by providing for the Minister of Finance and Personnel to lay a statement before the Assembly at least 14 days in advance of laying a draft Budget. The statement will specify the amount of UK funding for the financial year, as notified by the Secretary of State. A further statement will be required to be laid alongside the draft Budget showing that the amount of

United Kingdom funding required will not exceed the amount available and set out in the first statement. Where the amount of UK funding is revised, the Minister must lay a further statement, within four months of notification, showing the revisions to expenditure proposals where changes are required as a result of the notification. These proposals must not exceed the revised amount of United Kingdom funding.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister laid a legislative consent memorandum before the Assembly on 12 February. This was referred to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. I wish to record the appreciation of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the work of the Committee, in consultation with the Committees for Justice and Finance and Personnel, on this memorandum and for its report confirming support for the legislative consent motion.

While it is preferable for the Assembly itself to legislate on devolved matters, there are occasions when it makes sense to utilise a Westminster Bill rather than initiate a parallel process; such as now, for example, when the nomination provisions that form part of the motion would have been detached from their overall context. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Lyttle (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I rise to speak on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill legislative consent motion. I thank the junior Minister for her opening remarks.

The Committee considered the legislative consent memorandum on 17 February and noted that the Assembly's consent would be required in respect of two provisions. As the junior Minister has outlined, the first provision, in clause 1(4), is with regard to the power for the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two members of the Independent Reporting Commission. The second provision requiring consent is with regard to the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly in clause 9.

Given that these provisions are relevant to the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Justice, officials from those Departments joined with an official from OFMDFM to brief the Committee on the LCM on 17 February. The Committee also sought the views of the Committee for Finance and Personnel and the Committee for Justice. During the briefing, the Committee heard that the provision relating to the nominations of two members of the Independent Reporting Commission is part of a wider set of provisions relating to an excepted matter. Rather than dealing with this provision separately, UK legislation is being utilised as a measure of efficiency and practicality. The DOJ official confirmed that that Department had no objection to the provision but added that consultation with the Minister of Justice was expected on this matter.

In its response to the Committee, the Committee for Justice advised that it had also consulted with the Department of Justice. The Department's response, which was forwarded to the OFMDFM Committee, reiterated the view that, whilst the Minister of Justice accepts that the provision in clause 1(4) is consistent with the Fresh Start

Agreement, he would expect to be consulted by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on nominations.

As for the provision relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly, the Committee heard that the LCM gives effect to a commitment in the Fresh Start Agreement. That states that the UK Government will legislate, with Assembly consent, to ensure that the Assembly cannot consider spending plans that exceed the block grant allocated by the Treasury or the Northern Ireland Executive's borrowing limits when planned spending relies on those funding sources. The DFP official advised the Committee that that provision will not change the application of financial practice, because Northern Ireland is already required to live within the Treasury control totals. It will, however, formalise the process, as agreed in the Fresh Start Agreement.

The Committee for Finance and Personnel also sought the views of DFP on that provision. The response, which was copied to the Committee, advises that, as well as formalising existing processes, it is hoped that the LCM will provide for improved transparency in respect of funding sources, spending controls and assumptions underpinning the Budget position.

The Committee considered those views and its position on the LCM at its meeting on 2 March. The Committee recognised that, should the provisions in the Bill not be extended to Northern Ireland, agreed aspects of the Fresh Start Agreement may not be implemented at this stage. The Committee also accepted that the inclusion of the provisions in UK legislation is a practical approach.

During the discussions, some Members indicated the intention of their respective parties to table amendments to the Bill at Westminster. Their support for the Committee's position on the legislative consent motion was, therefore, without prejudice.

With those positions on the record, the Committee agreed, at its meeting on 2 March 2016, to support the legislative consent motion to extend certain provisions of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill to Northern Ireland.

Mr Lyons: As the Minister and the Deputy Chair made clear, we have the legislative consent motion before us. It has two provisions regarding the Independent Reporting Commission and clause 9 of the Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill. Those provisions are sensible, and the Deputy Chair outlined the Committee's scrutiny role. At this stage, that is the correct route for us to go down to ensure that the provisions in the Fresh Start Agreement can become reality.

As was mentioned, it is important that we have financial controls in place. Although the LCM will not change the arrangements for the way the Assembly spends its money and how much it spends, it will formalise them, which is good. It is good to show that we take our finance responsibilities seriously.

My party will, obviously, support these, as there are important determinations to be made in relation to the Fresh Start Agreement, which has our full support.

Mr Attwood: This is the last occasion on which I will speak in the Chamber in this mandate. It is yet to be determined whether I will have any speaking rights in the next mandate, but I take this moment to speak about you, Mr

Deputy Speaker. Over your long years of service, you have been relentless in pursuing the policies and politics that you believe in. You brought colour to the SDLP Assembly group and outside it, and you have been a relentless servant of Irish democracy. As your political career ends, although your political contribution will not end, I put on the record, on behalf of me, my party and, I am sure, everybody in the Chamber, how much your work has been appreciated here and outside of here, both in dark days and in better days.

If I have one regret, it is that, as you will recall, we once hatched a plot to ensure that you were made Speaker, but, when the opportunity presented itself, your service and your status as one of the elders of the House were not fully recognised. Save that, your career has been a monumental contribution to Irish politics and to this part of the island that you love.

1.45 pm

I turn, then, to the LCM. Last week, the SDLP took the opportunity to table about a dozen amendments to the Bill proceeding through Westminster. In our view, they would have enhanced what was proposed at Westminster. There are two or three matters that I want to press the junior Minister on, two of which arise immediately from the content of the LCM and one that arises from the broader content of the legislation, which has now been passed by the House of Commons and is on its way to the House of Lords.

Without prejudice to our view on 'A Fresh Start', one of the areas on which some progress was made — the junior Minister will recall this — was the commitments entered into, on paper at least, on criminal and paramilitary activity. The junior Minister will recall that, of the dozen papers that the SDLP contributed to the autumn talks process last year, quite a number dealt with the legacy issue, but two dealt with criminality and paramilitarism. One was on a whole-community approach to criminality and paramilitarism, and the other was on a whole-enforcement approach to paramilitary and criminal activity. Unlike some others, we shared those documents with all parties in an effort to upscale the outcome of the negotiations. In some ways, you can see that contribution in the new commitments entered into in the Westminster legislation on criminality and paramilitarism.

The amendment that the SDLP tabled at Westminster last week proposed that two members of the IRC — the Independent Reporting Commission — be appointed by the Northern Ireland Justice Minister following consultation with the First Ministers and subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, instead of being jointly appointed by FM and DFM, as the LCM proposes. My question for the junior Minister is this: given that better work was done in Stormont last autumn on paramilitarism and criminality, would ours not have been the better model? Given that the IRC will monitor what goes on in the community and given that what goes on in the community is of concern to all of us, would it not have been better if the LCM had had that process, with the buy-in of all of the Executive to the nominations to the IRC? It is a variation, if you like, on a theme raised in a previous debate: why are FM and DFM taking unto themselves the appointment of chairs or chief executives of certain public bodies under the transfer of functions order? Would it not have been better to source appointments to the IRC in a process requiring the

approval of all parties that choose to go into the Executive Committee on the far side of the election on 5 May rather than just the First Ministers? I am not making the point in that regard that, I have no doubt, will be made before the debate is over, unless I misread the situation, about how anybody with any background should have the authority to appoint to an IRC. That is not the point that I am making, although it may be a point that is made after I sit down. I make the point that, if the threat of paramilitarism and criminality is one that is shared by all parties and all citizens, it should have been a process of a shared outcome when it came to the appointment of the IRC.

The second point that I want to make to the junior Minister is about the budgetary processes. I have to say that, when questions were put to the Minister of Finance during the Final Stage of the Budget Bill a couple of weeks ago in relation to the budgetary process that arises from 'A Fresh Start', I did not get much satisfaction in terms of answers in respect of why this was being required and what the range and potential of these provisions were in respect of the budgetary processes. Having said that, we welcome the provisions that are now in the legislation in Westminster, but we argued that we should go further. We asked, "What is the real thinking behind all of this?". We argued that we should go further in terms of budgetary processes beyond the welcome addition of the statements that are to be laid in the House in respect of the block grant.

In the amendment that we tabled at Westminster last week, we argued for the integration of a lot more rigour into the new budgetary clause in order to have a lot more accountability and transparency. I do not intend to read into the record the amendment, which runs to a full page. It would have interrogated what is now in the Bill in Westminster so that this House would have a lot more knowledge, oversight, accountability and input into the budgetary processes. My colleagues in London got some sense, in respect of some of the arguments that the SDLP MPs made on our amendments, that there might have been some margin of sympathy — even from DUP MPs who, as you know, sit behind the SDLP MPs. I suggest to the junior Minister, given that that amendment was rejected and given its extensive scale — no doubt, people will see the fingerprints of Mark Durkan MP all over it — that she consider it and have a discussion with whoever is Minister of Finance after the election in order to scale up the operation of that amendment in terms of the Budget provisions going forward in the future. Both issues are very much sourced in the LCM today.

I want to raise the three following points very briefly. First, there is the need to record what the new Pledge of Office means and what the new pledge by Members of the Assembly will mean, once the new mandate is confirmed. It is no coincidence that in the Pledge of Office that is now amended, the first paragraph of that amendment says that Ministers shall:

"support the rule of law unequivocally in word and deed and to support all efforts to uphold it".

Those words are definitive and absolute:

"support the rule of law unequivocally in word and deed and to support all efforts to uphold it".

The obligation, further to that amended Pledge of Office, has three pillars: "unequivocally", "word and deed" and "all efforts".

Although I may be straying slightly beyond the LCM, let us be very clear about what those words mean. There have been events on this island in very recent history — in recent weeks — when issues about unequivocal support for the rule of law in word and deed, and all efforts to uphold it, have once again become problematic. That is before the ink on the page of the Westminster Bill is even dry.

A second point arises from that, and I urge the House to look at it. The SDLP amendments — maybe the SDLP comes up with this more often than others — produced a model to create a process around the Pledge of Office. Rather than have words on a piece of paper that people can raise their hands to and thereafter be problematic about, the SDLP proposed a model whereby the Pledge of Office and the commitment of Members could be monitored.

Mr Lyons: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will in a second. The SDLP model was to create the role of a pledge adjudicator, appointed by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints and involving our Lord Chief Justice. If an issue arose with the conduct of a Minister or a Member, there would then be a process whereby that could be interrogated, rather than left for others to determine.

Mr Lyons: The Member is making points about the Pledge of Office. He may think that they are valid points, but we are talking about an LCM today. What has the Pledge of Office got to do with what is in front of us?

Mr Attwood: Maybe the Member was not here for my first two points, which were very much sourced in the LCM. However, there is a piece of legislation at Westminster that has relevance to this Chamber every day hereafter until the law might be changed. You may not want to consider those matters, but, if we do not, they will come crashing in on us sooner or later.

My final point is that the SDLP proposed building into the Westminster legislation obligations not just on councillors but on others who sit on public bodies. Those obligations would relate to the Nolan principles and would upscale and upgrade the standards around public office at a time when we know from the bitter experience of recent weeks and days that questions still remain unresolved about standards in public office.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Question Time is scheduled to begin at 2.00 pm. I ask Members to take their ease until then. After Question Time, we will return to the debate on the LCM, and the next Member called to speak will be Mr Andy Allen.

The debate stood suspended.

(*Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair*)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Regional Development

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I advise Members that questions 3, 6, 9, 10 and 13 have been withdrawn.

Journey Times: South Belfast

1. **Ms Hanna** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the most recent assessment of journey times on the Ormeau Road and Ravenhill Road, Belfast. (AQO 9867/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): The Ormeau Road is one of the city's busiest radial routes. Care must be taken in assessing such data, as traffic conditions can vary due to numerous and varied vehicle and pedestrian interactions along the route. The latest journey-time information my Department has for the Ormeau Road is from 2013. The data relates to journey times for cars, vans and HGVs. For a road stretch between the Ravenhill Road roundabout and Annadale Embankment, the average speed was approximately 3·7 mph, and between Annadale Embankment and Cromac Square, in the city, the average speed was approximately 7·3 mph. That information is for the morning peak period of 7.30 am to 9.15 am. An assessment indicates a marginal decrease in journey times on both sections from 2011 information. However, from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm, the average speed from Ravenhill Road roundabout to Annadale Embankment was approximately 16·2 mph, and from Annadale Embankment to the city was 9·9 mph.

As a comparison, at peak times, bus journey times have been available through the BusTrak system since 2007. From that time up to 2014, the bus speeds on the Saintfield Road/Ormeau Road corridor have remained constant at between 5·9 mph and 6·8 mph. That includes the time taken to stop and pick up and set down passengers. Data for bicycle journeys on the Ormeau Road corridor are not routinely collected. A small number of timed journeys from Cairnshill Park and Ride to Belfast city centre via the Ormeau Road — that is about 3·8 miles — have indicated a typical off-peak journey time of 20 to 25 minutes. There is no journey-time information available for the Ravenhill Road.

Ms Hanna: I thank the Minister for that very comprehensive answer. She will be aware that this is a pressing issue, not just for those of us who live in south Belfast and use those roads every day, but as she says, it is a wider commuter corridor including from the Saintfield Road. I appreciate the efforts by the Department, including the work on bus and cycle transport. Ultimately, we need to get more cars off the road to reduce congestion, but I think that those speeds — I believe that, in 2013, it was the slowest road in Belfast, and I do not imagine that it has improved greatly for drivers —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Can we have a question, please?

Ms Hanna: Can the Minister advise when a new assessment will be given and what further actions might be taken to facilitate workers in south Belfast and further afield who are trying to get to work in the city centre?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question, and I take on board what she has said. I have spoken to officials about this, having looked at the responses received, and I have asked them to update the data, with bus lanes included in that and the enforcement associated with it. We are trying to encourage people to use public transport, and I have very good information about Cairnshill Park and Ride, which is used by an average of 500 vehicles a day. There has also been somewhere in the region of a 12% increase in the number of passengers using buses. We also want to encourage the safe use of cycles on that route. The Member representing the area will be cognisant of the fact that there are somewhere in the region of 4,000 pupils enrolled in schools within that small area. There are seven schools with very high enrolment in that particular area, which adds to the congestion, so it is also about encouraging schools to use active travel methods.

There are things that can be used to encourage people out of their cars and on to public transport, but it is also about making the environment much safer for them to do so.

Mr Lyttle: I seek the assurances of the Minister for Regional Development that the Lagan footbridge and cycle bridge, which will connect the Ormeau Road and Ravenhill Road areas of south and east Belfast, remains part of the Department's plans, despite unionist councillors' opposition to the planning permission that was granted by Belfast City Council for that exciting project.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. He rightly says that planning permission was granted in February for the footbridge. The bridge orders have also been made for that facility. Obviously, we are in a situation where budgets are being developed. The project has a potential cost of between £8 million and £9 million, so it is very much subject to funding being made available. While I recognise that it would be of benefit to cyclists and walkers and would perhaps aid in the reduction of congestion as we move forward, the residents also have to be taken into consideration. Further conversations will have to be had with them, and, obviously, any future Minister would need to do so before making a final decision on the facility.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. With the indulgence of the Deputy Speaker on your last Question Time, Minister, I congratulate you on your short but successful tenure. We got some things over the line in south Belfast.

Given the two-hour traffic jam that is the story of south Belfast every morning, is the solution not to take the Belfast rapid transit (BRT), which will be a great success in east and west, and — whoever is Minister — expand it into the south of the city, perhaps right from the city centre to Carryduff?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his kind comments. I am fully committed to Belfast rapid transit and have been. It is important that we look at expanding it not only to the south of the city but to the north. Work will commence on an assessment of that, and the route should be identified. Obviously, it is looking at an area where there is a lot of traffic, so that it can ease that congestion, and

where there will be people who will use it. A natural route would be from Cairnshill down the Ormeau Road. I would be very much in favour of that as a proposition. There is an outline timetable for that, but it is, obviously, provisional at this stage. They are looking to prepare an options assessment in 2017-18, to prepare the business case in 2018-19, to have a detailed design and implementation in 2019-2020 and for it to be operational in 2022. Obviously, that is all very provisional, but I am hopeful that that will be a positive outcome for that area and will ease the congestion described by the Member.

A26: Safety Enhancements

2. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the safety enhancements on the A26 Lisnevenagh Road. (AQO 9868/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I can report that the safety review of the A26 Lisnevenagh Road is now complete. It concludes that, whilst there is not an unusually high incidence of collisions along that route, given the volume of traffic using the road, the number of fatal collisions is a cause for concern. Transport NI has identified three sites that warranted further investigation and where collision remedial measures can be introduced to influence driver behaviour and reduce the risk of collisions. The sites that have been singled out for further investigation are the Barnish Road/Creevery Road junction; Woodgreen Road and Maine Road junction; and Cromkill Road junction.

Police investigations of the fatal collisions are ongoing. However, I am aware that there is great interest in the matter from a number of local MLAs. I intend to have meetings with local representatives at which I can detail the proposed measures. Transport NI officials intend to make a joint presentation with the PSNI to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to inform members of the council of the findings of the report and to seek their support for the proposed collision remedial actions.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for her answer and for the invite to the information session that will be held, I think, next Monday in Ballymena.

With regard to those three sites specifically, Minister, can you give any more detail at this stage of whether you are undertaking purely remedial exercises or whether there will be substantial investment to make those junctions safe for all road users? I acknowledge that you said that there was not an unusually high number of collisions, but I think that the number of fatalities on that road is something that concerns all the local elected representatives. Since I last raised the matter with you in topical questions, we have seen the unfortunate death of Karla Cameron at the Woodgreen junction.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, I acknowledge the comments that he has made. With regard to each of those areas, they are very site-specific in relation to the recommendations that will be put to members. That will include the provision and review of street lighting and legislative changes to ban right-turning movements on at least two of those roads. Enhanced signage and road markings will also be included in that. Obviously, that will become clearer when we have the conversation.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her answers to date and for taking up my invitation to come down on site to the Woodgreen junction to see for herself the risks that drivers have to take daily, sometimes more than once.

The Minister mentioned three specific sites. I agree with her that they are indeed very dangerous crossings, but I want to say to the Minister that I believe that there could well be a fourth crossing that is potentially very dangerous, which is the Valley Road/Shankbridge junction —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Can we have a question?

Mr Frew: — that is very close to Carnaghts Primary School. I have met the principal, Mr Ian Henderson, who has been campaigning for many years for road improvements. Will the Minister consider placing a fourth junction into the system?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. The safety review considered all junctions along the route, with particular attention being paid to locations where at least four collisions had occurred in the last three years. Records show that there has been one collision at the Valley Road junction in the last three years. That collision occurred on 16 November 2014. That junction currently has junction warning signs, map-type advance direction signs and advance warning signs of the school on both approaches to the junction on the A26. The junction will benefit from the recommendation in the report that a route treatment be completed to refresh and replace the signs and lines to ensure consistency of information to drivers.

Mr Allister: The Minister speaks about collision remedial measures, which sounds very good, but the only thing that she then spoke about was extra street lighting, extra road markings and a ban on right turns at a couple of junctions. Surely, Minister, it will take much more structural change than that to bring safety to those deathtrap junctions, particularly at Woodgreen. I trust that the Minister is prepared to do more than what has been suggested.

Miss M McIlveen: I appreciate the Member's comments. I will meet Mr Allister at that junction on Monday morning in advance of the meeting with the other MLAs. At the meeting, it will actually be useful for all of us to sit around the table with the engineers, look at the proposals and talk about the available options for each junction. As I said, each junction is different and very site-specific, and there will be recommendations for each of them. The opportunity to have those conversations will be on Monday. Out of that, we can pursue any further suggestions or changes that others may feel are appropriate.

Knockmore/M1 Link Road

4. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposals for a link road between the Knockmore area of Lisburn and junction 8 of the M1. (AQO 9870/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: In the Belfast metropolitan transport plan 2015, the Knockmore to Sprucefield link road, known as the M1/Knockmore Link, has been identified as a developer-led proposal. This means that it is the responsibility of the developers of adjacent land to deliver the road scheme as part of their development. As a consultee to Planning Service, my Department has in the past engaged in pre-application discussions with a potential developer.

However, as delivery of the link road is dependent on future development of west Lisburn by other parties, it is not possible for me to provide an accurate timescale at this time.

2.15 pm

On 28 January 2016, I met Dr Donaldson and other members of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to discuss the road scheme proposal. I subsequently wrote to Dr Donaldson on 2 February 2016 to confirm that my Department will undertake a preliminary traffic assessment of what the traffic impacts would be on the surrounding road network by the provision of the M1 Knockmore link. It is envisaged that the results should provide objective evidence for further discussion between Transport NI and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council officers. The results of the traffic assessment should be available by the end of March 2016, after which I will write again to Dr Donaldson about the outcome.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for her answer. After all the razzmatazz of the photographs in the 'Ulster Star' and so on, it does not sound as if the project is anywhere near the point where it might be put on the list to go ahead. You said that the funding model is developer-led. Is the developer of the surrounding land supposed to pay for the entire cost of the road, or is there input from other sources?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. At present, no funding has been identified in our current budget for the provision of the Knockmore link. As I said, it has a developer-led designation. I met the council, along with others, including those from SIB who have an interest, and the proposal that was put to the Department at that time was a partnership model, which would include all three partners. Hence I asked my officials to conduct a survey to see whether or not it could be regarded as a strategic road. I found that to be a productive meeting, and I was encouraged by the proposal that was put to us by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. I believe that, moving forward, my Department needs to look at alternative means of funding. That may include partnerships with local councils and others in order to deliver on key roads.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As somebody who travels the M1 daily, I know that there is activity taking place on the Maze/Long Kesh site. There was a proposed junction to go from the M1 into the site. Is that still a commitment of the Department, or has it been scrapped?

Miss M McIlveen: I am aware of proposals for the provision of direct access to the site from the M1 and from Sprucefield. The provision of the infrastructure is really a matter for OFMDFM and the Maze Long Kesh (MLK) Development Corporation to fund and deliver it. As a consultee to the development, Transport NI has met key stakeholders, including the director of the MLK Development Corporation, just to provide advice on the site. My officials will be available to give advice on road design aspects of any proposal that comes forward. I understand that a series of transport management meetings organised by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society took place again in advance of the 2015 Balmoral Show, which was held at the Maze site in May 2015. That advised of temporary signing and general traffic management arrangements in order to minimise the likely traffic disruption during the event.

As part of the Halftown Road safety improvements, there has been work carried out. A 970-metre long and 3-metre wide footway/cycleway has been constructed along the frontage of the MLK site at Halftown Road. There is a piece of work around exploring the potential to extend the Northern Ireland cycle network to the site, and footway/cycleway work has commenced along the frontage of the site.

A57: Dualling

5. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of anticipated growth in passenger numbers and airline routes, whether she plans to dual the section of the A57 from the M2 to Belfast International Airport. (AQO 9871/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I recognise the importance of transport links to our ports and airports. The regional development strategy 2035 identifies Belfast International Airport, along with George Best Belfast City Airport and the airport in Londonderry, as strategically important transport interchanges. The implementation of my Department's strategic road improvement programme has enhanced regional access to Belfast International Airport. Current dual carriageway improvement works to the A26 and recent announcements regarding the A6 flagship project will reinforce that.

In 2014, Transport NI commissioned a feasibility study to identify potential options to improve strategic links between the M1 and M2/M22 and Belfast International Airport. A number of potential route corridors were examined, several of which will be taken forward to the next stage for further study. No commitment on funding can be given at this time. The next review of the investment strategy for Northern Ireland may, however, provide an opportunity for my Department to look at the prioritisation of new schemes. At that time, connections to Belfast International Airport can be considered along with other existing and proposed schemes elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

Mrs Cameron: I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for the good job that she has done in her term of office. Given that this is her last Question Time, I wish her all the best. I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she advise what the findings of the feasibility study were and what discussions her Department has had with Belfast International Airport as a result of those findings?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. The study identified a number of potential route corridors, including improvements to the A26 and A57. The next stage will be to refine the options with a view to undertaking a more detailed options appraisal. As with everything, progress will, obviously, be subject to funding. My officials regularly meet officials from Belfast International Airport and the other two airports. Those meetings mostly concern airport noise and control-of-land issues, but transport-related issues come up and are explored. In the coming months, my officials will meet members of the Belfast International Airport consultative forum to discuss a number of transport-related issues, including access to the airport, parking and traffic management matters. Previous engagement by the Department with Belfast International Airport staff included talks with Mr John Doran, the then managing director, and that resulted in Transport NI commissioning the feasibility

study to examine the links between the M1 and M2/M22 with Belfast International Airport.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. First, I commend the Minister on her time in office. Does the Minister agree that an extension of the railway system to Belfast International Airport would be not only a boost to the long-term sustainability of the airport but a great attraction for service users?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. When you travel to the Continent, get off at the airport and see excellent rail services, you absolutely want that for home. I recognise the strategic importance of our airports and of their having good links to our major towns and cities. However, we have to set that in a context of priorities for investment, particularly given the challenges as we move forward. You also need to understand that, within any recommendations for improvements, the establishment of a rail link to Belfast International Airport would require in the region of 10 million passengers, and the latest figures for 2014 indicate that there were just over four million passengers. I recommend to the Member the very good bus link service from the airport to the city centre. I understand that it operates every 10 minutes at peak flight times and at a minimum of every 30 minutes at all other times.

Mr Cochrane-Watson: I also commend the Minister for her work since taking over the role. In discussions with representatives of Belfast International, they say to me that the biggest inhibitor to growth is not transport links but air passenger duty. Have there been any discussions between you and ministerial colleagues on APD?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Unfortunately, that is outside the remit of my Department, but I am happy to have a conversation with colleagues and pass that information to him.

York Street Interchange

7. **Mr Ross** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the York Street interchange project. (AQO 9873/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: A public inquiry into the York Street interchange project was held in November 2015. In due course, my Department will publish a departmental statement setting out its response to the recommendations in the inspectors' report and make the report available for inspection. My Department has commenced the procurement process and intends to have a design-and-build contractor on board this summer to help to fully develop the scheme in order to be in a position to commence construction towards the end of 2017.

The development and construction of the scheme to the programme that I outlined is very dependent on the availability of finance. A full economic business case will have to be approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel before any commitments can be given to start construction.

Mr Ross: I, too, congratulate the Minister on her term of office, not least because everybody else has, and I would not want to seem discourteous to her. *[Laughter.]* Ulster University has relocated much of its product to the city centre and will be very much part of the project and how it moves forward. I think particularly about the safety of

students who will want to cycle to the campus or even walk from the surrounding area. Will that be part of the project developed by her Department?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I met representatives of Ulster University to discuss its project and what the Department can do to assist, particularly as it moves a considerable number of students into the city centre.

Measures are included in the scheme to provide better connections between Yorkgate Station and the campus for those who want to walk or cycle. The scheme proposal includes high-quality footway links along both sides of York Street. Those will replace the existing fractured arrangements and take account of the increased pedestrian movements associated with the development.

Inbound and outbound cycleways are included along the length of York Street. Enhanced cycle provision, including improved connections to the streets at either end of the scheme, which arose from the consultation, was presented at the public inquiry. The inspectors' report gives their views on the matter, and a departmental statement will set out my Department's response in due course.

We look forward to the university relocating and the regeneration of that side of Belfast. Hopefully, it will improve and assist with plans for improved public transport in and around that area.

Mr Patterson: Given that European funding could make up 40% of the total package for the York Street interchange, has the Minister given thought to the effect that Brexit would have on the future of this much-needed project?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. At this stage, it is too soon to comment, as we have not yet had the referendum. I guess that we will cross that bridge at that time.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Chris Hazzard is not in his place. David Hilditch is not in his place. I call Kieran McCarthy.

Roads: Ards Peninsula

12. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister for Regional Development for her assessment of the condition of the roads in the Ards peninsula. (AQO 9878/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has a duty to maintain all public roads in reasonable condition. Regular inspections of the road network are carried out and defects prioritised for repair depending on their severity. Roads may also be repaired as part of planned programmes of work, such as resurfacing, surface dressing or larger planned patching subject to available resources. In the current financial year, over £900,000 has been spent on resurfacing schemes in the Ards area, and I can confirm that approximately 55% of the allocated budget for resurfacing in the Ards and north Down area has been spent on roads in the Ards peninsula. I believe that that represents a significant investment in monetary terms and a commitment to maintain the roads in the Ards peninsula. As a Member for the area, I welcome that investment and recognise the importance of investing in our road maintenance in Ards and across Northern Ireland.

2.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That is the end of our time for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Mr McCarthy: I wish the Minister well. *[Laughter.]*

A5: Phase 1(b)

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of Kieran McCarthy and me, I commend you on your time in office. Is that OK, Kieran?

Mr McCarthy: Hear, hear.

T1. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the commencement of phase 1(b) of the A5. (AQT 3661/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I announced a public consultation for the whole scheme in February, and that will go on to 4 April. This relates to the environmental statement for the full length of the scheme, along with a new draft direction order, draft vesting orders and stopping up of private access. That is for the length of the route from Newbuildings to Ballygawley, and that obviously includes the 1(b) section. The current funding profile agreed to 2020-21 would mean that 1(a) is commenced in 2017, which means that it should be completed by 2019, with 1(b), which is south of Omagh to Ballygawley, hopefully commencing at the latter part of the five-year budget period. That will require some further work with DFP on the funding package and is very much subject to budget.

Ms Boyle: Minister, I thank your officials and staff for their assistance during the consultations and the exhibitions that have gone on throughout. Their assistance was greatly appreciated not just by us MLAs but by others, including those who will be affected on that road. Minister, what has your feedback been to date on the exhibitions at the consultation?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I have spoken to officials about this. The exhibitions were very well attended: we had in the region of 1,054 registered attendees. Feedback from officials was that it had been positive, with the vast majority of those attending very supportive of the scheme. However, I am aware that there are those who have concerns about their properties, and that is absolutely understandable, given the impact that the scheme will have on those families as we move forward through the scheme. My officials will work closely with those landowners to assist them in any way that they can as we move forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Disabled Parking Provision: East Belfast

T3. **Mr Allen** asked the Minister for Regional Development what parking provisions are in place for disabled people in East Belfast. (AQT 3663/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Disabled parking bays are available in East Belfast as they are across Northern Ireland. They are in a number of areas, including provision in car parks, on-street parking and in private shopping centres. If the Member has a

particular area that he believes my officials should look at and that would benefit from additional disabled bays, I will be happy to discuss it with him.

Mr Allen: I thank the Minister for her answer. Minister, I have been approached by constituents with concerns about the Belmont Road. They are concerned about the parking bay that is already in existence there being abused by individuals who do not have or are not displaying a disabled badge. I know that we are heading towards the end of the mandate, but can the Minister give me a commitment that her officials will provide enforcement and look to add bays?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I am aware that traffic attendants are in that area at least five days a week. It is for them to ensure that badges are displayed in the correct manner and that penalty charge notices are issued to prevent such behaviour continuing in those bays.

I am more than happy to meet the Member alongside officials to discuss further the issue arising at that particular point along the road. I appreciate that it is a very busy road. There are lots of shops in the area, as well as cafes and restaurants, so there should be frequent movement of traffic in those parking areas anyway. As I said, I am happy to discuss it further with the Member.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 4 has been withdrawn. Daithí McKay is not in his place to ask question 5.

Broad Road/Greystone Road Junction: Limavady

T6. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the requested improvements to the Broad Road/Greystone Road junction in Limavady. (AQT 3666/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I am aware of his interest in the area. I advise him that Transport NI has a scheme proposal to provide a roundabout at the junction. I can say that detailed design and acquisition procedures are well-advanced, and the scheme will move forward, subject to the completion of land acquisition and the necessary finance, as always, being in place.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for her reply. I commend her on her term of office as well.

That junction is very busy, and many road users find it very hazardous. I realise that the Minister is very busy, but I and some of my colleagues would greatly appreciate a site meeting with her at the junction.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. My diary secretary will be panicking at the number of meetings that I have agreed to before the end of this session, but I am more than content to meet the Member in his constituency.

Blue Badge Scheme: Update

T7. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on her Department's blue badge scheme. (AQT 3667/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. The blue badge scheme, which already provides a wide range of parking concessions for people with severe walking disabilities and those who are partially blind, is valued by all those who need extra support. Last year,

my Department published the findings of a consultation process, and a number of key recommendations emerged that, I am pleased to say, received wide-ranging support from blue badge holders and other stakeholders. The recommendations included extending the eligibility criteria to include children between the ages of two and three with specific medical conditions. I am pleased to announce that that will come into force from 1 April. Furthermore, facilitating existing benefits such as the personal independence payment to support applications will come into effect when welfare reform is enacted in June 2016.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for her answer. I am very glad that the last question that I asked in this mandate — of her anyway — delivered some good news. There had been some concerns about the fact that, historically, there was at times a backlog in processing blue badge applications. A lot of time was involved in getting them processed. Is the Minister able to advise us whether anything has been done to ensure that a more streamlined application process is in place to ensure that those much-needed passes are not bogged down in bureaucracy?

Miss M McIlveen: I had the pleasure of being able to go up to Enniskillen to meet those involved in the blue badge processing unit, and I commend them for the work that they have been doing. Obviously, they had been under a great deal of pressure. The backlog is being worked through, and I am glad to say that the new system will simplify the process by allowing applicants to apply online.

The blue badge was introduced over 30 years ago, and, during that time, the scheme has been operated at a significantly subsidised rate of just £2. To simplify it and make it a faster system, some slight adjustment in cost will be required, which will see the fee increase from £2 to £10. But the service will be improved and that will allow us to move towards cost recovery.

Caw Roundabout: Safety Measures

T9. **Mr Diver** asked the Minister for Regional Development, after commending her on her work to date and wishing her well on her return to the Assembly, to outline any plans that her Department has to put measures in place to make the Caw roundabout safer, given that it is an issue of great road safety concern in the Foyle constituency — concern that he is sure that Mr Middleton, who is sitting beside the Minister, will share. (AQT 3669/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. There is a survey, and an initial analysis has been carried out in relation to collision history in and around that particular roundabout. My officials are carrying out a much more detailed assessment of that area in order to establish what remedial measures are required. At this stage, I do not have that information. It should be with my Department within the next couple of months.

Mr Diver: I thank the Minister for her response and look forward to the results of that review. Will the Department ensure that it is taking into account the significance of that particular roundabout, which is, obviously, on a cross-border route? A lot of traffic, not just in the Foyle and Derry area, goes through it; the route is transnational in nature. A much-publicised incident recently involved the PSNI; even they had an accident on that route. Whatever the criteria used in the Department, can we ensure that roads that are

of particular risk are brought to the top of whatever list is being considered?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, I am familiar with that roundabout. As he says, it is busy. Approximately 50,000 vehicles use it daily, which is quite incredible. Traffic surveys have been carried out in the last couple of years in advance of this. However, I think that it would be prudent of us to wait for the assessment to be concluded and to move forward from there, with regard to where it sits within the priority.

Road Maintenance Funding: Mid Ulster

T10. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much extra has been allocated this year for road maintenance in the Mid Ulster District Council area. (AQT 3670/11-16)

Mr McGlone: I offer my apologies for not being present for a question yesterday. It appears that the agenda moved much more rapidly than I had anticipated.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I do not have very specific information on that, but he will be aware that I was able to secure additional funding in the November monitoring round. Also, in the earlier part of this year, I was able to secure some initial efficiency savings, amounting to somewhere in the region of £3.2 million, which is being distributed around the divisions. With regard to the mid-Ulster area — I am not sure whether this includes all of the Member's constituency, but it certainly includes Cookstown, Magherafelt and Dungannon — an additional estimated £1.4 million was received for structural maintenance and around £800,000 for routine maintenance.

Mr McGlone: I thank the Minister for her response. The key issue is that I have received numerous complaints about potholes and the increased damage done. I had a complaint fairly recently from a guy who sent me a photograph of the rim of his car, which had been very severely buckled. I do not have to have the information today, but could the Minister provide me with details in writing, at some stage, on whether there has been an increase in the number of claims for damage, as a consequence of potholes, in that particular area in mid-Ulster?

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I think that all Members in the Chamber could probably relay similar stories from their areas. As you are aware, additional moneys have been made available. Divisional managers have been working very hard to get through backlogs and are prioritising main routes in that. There are figures for claims made for damage to vehicles, and I am happy to provide that information to the Member.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That is the end of our questions to the Minister for Regional Development. We will now move on to questions to the Minister for Social Development.

2.45 pm

Social Development

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I advise Members that question 6 has been withdrawn.

Gas Heating: East Belfast

1. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Social Development when the 710 Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties in East Belfast with Economy 7, oil or solid fuel heating, will be converted to gas in accordance with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive programme of heating replacement. (AQO 9882/11-16)

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): I thank the Member for her question. The Housing Executive has advised me that, pursuant to your previous question on this matter, a further 46 homes in East Belfast have been converted to gas, leaving 664 that have Economy 7, oil or solid fuel heating still to be converted. Of those, 358 are included in heating replacement schemes that are either ongoing or due to commence by April 2017. A further 181 homes have refused to have gas installed. The remaining properties are in two of the tower blocks that the Housing Executive does not currently plan to convert to gas.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he provide an update on the policy that his Department has on converting houses from oil heating when they are on the gas network?

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive policy is to install gas heating in accordance with its programme in properties where gas is available and it is technically feasible to do so.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Can the Minister tell us whether the Housing Executive is working to a time frame for converting costly and environmentally damaging electrical heating appliances to gas?

Lord Morrow: Yes. That is the intention where it is doable, but it may not be practical in every instance. Surprisingly, and similar to the answer to the main and supplementary questions, some people, in particular, elderly people, do not want changes in their home. They do not want the hassle. There is no enforcement when a tenant says, "Look, I would prefer to carry on with things the way they are". But yes, the objective is to replace Economy 7.

Mr Diver: Are there any thoughts or plans in his Department to reduce the qualifying period that people have to meet to have their heating upgraded to a more modern system, such as the modern gas system, given that this would be a very clear way of taking people out of fuel poverty?

Lord Morrow: The Member raises an interesting question about whether it is possible to reduce the qualifying time. There are no plans to do that at the moment. However, since it has been raised, I will look at this in the few days that I remain in the Department. I think it is something that should be looked at, and, if it is practical to do so, I cannot see why it cannot be done. But there will still be restraints, not least financial restraints, on doing the whole thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I remind Members that they should continue to stand if they wish to ask a question and be called.

Social Housing: Insulation

2. **Mr Lyons** asked the Minister for Social Development how he is improving insulation in social housing. (AQO 9883/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive makes long-term investment in tenants' homes through planned programmes of work, including a number of different schemes aimed at preventing heat loss, improving energy efficiency and insulation. Those include the upgrading of roof space insulation, the replacement of single-glazed windows with double glazing and the replacement of old inefficient heating systems with modern fuel-efficient boilers.

Its external cyclic maintenance (ECM) schemes cover any issues relating to the external fabric of the dwelling and, where damp, mould growth or condensation have been identified, it is addressed. The response maintenance programme is also used to remedy immediate problems that may arise.

In relation to new-build social homes in the social housing development programme, the Department is currently considering whether additional housing association grant funding should be provided for schemes where thermal efficiency exceeds current building regulations standards. Consultation is currently ongoing, and a final decision is expected later this year.

Mr Lyons: I thank the Minister for his answer and for all the work that he has carried out in the Department since he took office. I very much appreciate that he has taken the time to meet me on a number of issues that I have brought to his attention, and insulation is one of them. Further to that, will he confirm whether the findings of the cavity wall insulation inspection report of 2014 by the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) will be taken into account by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)?

Lord Morrow: Yes. I can confirm that the Member has been quite consistent and, indeed, persistent in relation to this issue. I have met him to discuss it in some detail. The issues contained in the SERC/NIHE report on cavity wall insulation are a UK-wide issue and are not unique to Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive has told me that it has no current plans to isolate the specific properties that are referred to in the report from the remainder of its stock.

I wrote to the Housing Executive about this matter further on 8 February to ask how it will rectify the situation in the remaining homes. It is the Housing Executive's intention to bring forward programmes of work related to insulation for properties that have been identified by the recent stock condition survey as in most need and in line with the asset management strategy. This work will require a focus on the significant number of properties that have, to date, not benefited from any insulation work.

Furthermore, essentially the Housing Executive's view is that the limited resources that it has available for investment should be determined by a strategic response to the formidable body of evidence that has been provided by a comprehensive survey of one quarter — around 22,000 — of all its homes, rather than an issue-specific report that is based on a sample of just 206 homes.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat. Many people across the North, including people in rural areas, live in private rented or social housing that has little or no insulation. What strategy does the Department have to deal with that serious issue?

Lord Morrow: I take the Member's point. The joint DSD/Housing Executive asset commission has provided the Housing Executive with comprehensive and robust data

on the condition of its stock and a holistic understanding of its long-term future investments. The Member mentioned the private sector, and it should be noted that grants and funding have been made available to private landlords to tackle the issue. I encourage private landlords — I ask all Members to do likewise — to make use of the grant aid that is available. Sometimes, it is the case that there is not enough awareness of exactly what is available, but that may change in future. Hopefully, it will not be long until we see the whole of the housing stock, whether it is in the private or the social sector — it has to be acknowledged that the private rented sector is one of the major landlords in Northern Ireland — making use of the funding that is available in order to address the issue that he raised.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. There are schemes to replace windows and, if I picked him up right, there will be schemes for cavity wall insulation. Does he intend to look at schemes for the replacement of front and back doors? Homes are being improved for insulation purposes through cavity wall insulation and window replacement, but the doors still remain a problem.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. In some areas, schemes are being taken up to replace front and back doors.

If the Member has a particular area that he has a particular interest in, he can let me know as I walk past him today, or he can call in. We will take a look and let him know where exactly that scheme is, if it is on at all. If he talks to us about it, there is a better chance that it will be on a scheme.

Mr Dickson: Minister, thank you for your answers thus far. Clearly you will be aware that many Members have been lobbied by the cavity wall insulation industry with regard to the failures of cavity wall insulation in a number of properties, particularly Housing Executive properties. Will the Minister explain to the House why, given the high failure rate of cavity wall insulation and its importance in delivering appropriate warmth to homes, the Housing Executive is not conducting camera inspections of cavity walls?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. Cavity wall insulation is a subject that has been tossed around for quite some time. It has to be said that there have been what I would call honest attempts to deliver on that matter. In some cases, there have been some issues with it. My Department is looking at that with the Housing Executive to see if there is a high list of deficiencies and where those deficiencies exist.

The Savills report, which is a comprehensive report commissioned by the Housing Executive on all its housing stock, has just been published. When that report has been gone through in some detail, those are the very issues that we expect to be teased out, and that will leave the Housing Executive better placed in the future to tackle the issues that Mr Dickson raised.

Housing Stress: East Belfast

3. **Mr Allen** asked the Minister for Social Development how the number of people in housing stress in East Belfast compares to the figure in May 2011. (AQO 9884/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. In 2011, the waiting list for East Belfast stood at 2,125, of which 1,058 applicants were deemed to be in housing

stress. The current waiting list for East Belfast stands at 1,661, of which 904 applicants are deemed to be in housing stress.

Although that remains a challenge for the area, I am happy to advise that, as part of the 2016-17 to 2018-19 social housing development programme, there are plans to deliver 311 new homes. The delivery of those new homes and the reletting of existing stock will, hopefully, go some way to addressing the housing stress in East Belfast. The Housing Executive continues to keep housing need under review and to develop plans to help those in housing stress.

Mr Allen: I thank the Minister for his answers. Will he outline how many homes will be developed in East Belfast under the social housing development programme?

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive plans to deliver 311 new social start units across East Belfast under the new housing programme between 2016 and 2019.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for authorising his officials to meet me about a Clanmil Housing shared neighbourhood development at the former Lisnasharragh High School site in East Belfast. Would he be minded to support the inclusion of mixed tenure and a small number of affordable homes in that development?

Lord Morrow: I am prepared to look at and consider that. In the short time that is left to me in post, I would need to be at it very soon. I give an undertaking today to look at that. I have listened carefully to what the Member has suggested.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister please give a breakdown of the East Belfast housing stress figure in relation to council boundaries? That would accurately reflect where housing stress lies so that it can be more effectively dealt with.

Lord Morrow: I do not have the figures in front of me for the breakdown that the Member has requested. However, it is something that we can take a look at following today's Question Time. If those figures are obtainable and can be extracted, I will forward them to the Member so that she will see exactly where the issues are in relation to the question that she has asked. I am sorry; I do not have that information in front of me.

3.00 pm

Mrs D Kelly: Land acquisition is one of the biggest obstacles identified by the Federation of Housing Associations in relation to social housing new build. Will the Minister advise not only what land is available for social housing in East Belfast but whether his Department or the Housing Executive will take strides to acquire land right across Belfast?

Lord Morrow: Land acquisition has always been a major issue, and it does not get resolved quickly. In my constituency and in the town of Dungannon, where I live, there are always problems about where we can get land for housing. Let it be said that the Housing Executive and those tasked with the job of identifying areas for build are pursuing these issues and trying to plan not just 12 months but years ahead. I assure the Member that that is prevalent and ongoing in the Department and in consultation with the Housing Executive. If she has suggestions about her constituency, she might want to talk to the new Minister when she comes back after the election.

Welfare Reform

4. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the average and maximum level of benefits protected by the planned mitigation measures as part of welfare reform. (AQO 9885/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The average and maximum levels of benefits protected each year by the planned mitigation measures as part of welfare reform are as follows. The employment and support allowance (ESA) time-limiting average is £5,327, and the maximum is £5,327. The adult disability premium average is £3,640, and the maximum is £10,024. The disability protection average is £2,005, and the maximum is £7,287. The social sector size criteria average is £666, and the maximum is £1,200. The £26,000 benefit cap average is £2,811, and the maximum is £14,340. The carer's allowance average is £2,564, and the maximum is £6,390.

The maximum amounts for social sector size criteria, benefit cap and carer's allowance have been based on an average of the top 10 highest benefit amounts protected under those schemes through the welfare reform mitigation measures. That is to protect the confidentiality of individual cases as the components that make up those benefit amounts will depend on individual circumstances. That is in accordance with the 'Code of Practice for Official Statistics' from the UK Statistics Authority, which states that official statistics must not reveal the identity of an individual or organisation, or any private information relating to them. The benefit cap figure quoted is based on the £26,000 benefit cap and has been based around capping households on their entire universal credit award. Initially, the benefit cap award will apply to housing benefit before the introduction of universal credit.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Minister's two minutes are up.

Lord Morrow: Ultimately, the full universal credit award will be subject to the cap.

Mr Allister: Amongst that plethora of figures, I will focus on the welfare cap. I think that the Minister is saying that he is protecting the benefits of at least 10 families at a level above £40,000 a year, because the average protection is £14,000 on top of the benefit cap. Is it correct that there are multiple families of that order still receiving benefits in excess of £40,000? Is the Minister comfortable with that? Does he think that it is a good spend of public money?

Lord Morrow: Sometimes, it is not a matter of what the Minister is or is not comfortable with; it is about what the regulations clearly state must happen. I never have any control over that.

I will double-check the number of families for you, because I know that you will be interested in the exact detail. I will forward that to you.

Mr Frew: Does the Minister know how much a working family would have to earn each year to bring their net income above £26,000?

Lord Morrow: An annual net income of £26,000 is equivalent to a gross income of approximately £33,700.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Has the Minister met the expert panel on

welfare? Is the panel content that the mitigation measures will help to protect those most in need?

Lord Morrow: Yes. I have to assume that the expert panel is content. I would be bitterly disappointed — I suspect that the House and others would be, too — if it were not. After all, it is the expert panel that has been providing these figures for us and doing the work. As the questioner and I referred to, they are the experts and we are led by them. If it transpires later that, in fact, they are not confident, questions will have to be asked, but I am assured that they are.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. In light of recent announcements emanating from GB, particularly on cuts to ESA and the personal independence payment, has any assessment or evaluation been carried out, or even any connection made with the Departments in GB, to establish the consequential budgetary and policy implications for welfare reform here in Northern Ireland?

Lord Morrow: The mitigation scheme is designed to provide financial support to claimants who are in receipt of benefits when the welfare reforms are introduced. Furthermore, the introduction of a time limit means that affected claimants will be notified of the change only a few months before their benefit is reduced or stopped altogether. Effectively, the one-year time-limiting rule will be applied retrospectively. Anyone who claims benefit after the welfare reforms are introduced will be made aware of the conditions that apply to that benefit at the time of application. This means that employment and support allowance claimants will be aware that the contribution-based element will be paid for only one year if they are in work-related activity. They will be aware of the impact a year in advance and have time to prepare for the benefit ceasing.

Social Housing: South Antrim

5. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the new social housing planned for South Antrim in the next two years. (AQO 9886/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I can advise that work on 248 new social housing units is planned to start in the South Antrim parliamentary constituency area over the next two years. You will also be interested to note that, so far in the 2015-16 financial year, 74 new social housing units have been completed in South Antrim, with a further nine nearing completion. Of course, you will be aware that programme schemes can be lost, or slip to future programme years, for a variety of reasons. Schemes can also be added to the social housing development programme through the annual housing association bidding round/programme formulation process.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answer. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for his help during his short time in post. Will the Minister expand on that information by giving me the figure held by the Department for the total projected housing need for South Antrim?

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive, as the arbiter of housing need, determines how many new homes should be provided in any specific geographical area and progresses schemes to meet the demand. The Housing Executive is working to address housing stress in South Antrim in a number of ways. It is addressed most notably through, for example, the reletting of existing stock, the

refurbishment of void properties and the allocation of new-build schemes. The number of new social homes required is based on an annual housing need assessment. It examines the supply and demand, highlighting any areas where there are gaps, and predicts what will be required over a five-year period to develop the social housing development programme.

Mr McCrossan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. He will be aware that, since 2010, only about 60 new social housing properties have been built in West Tyrone. That represents the lowest number of builds in any constituency across the North. Considering the massive waiting list, with half the people on it in housing stress, does the Minister agree that it is time for action to deliver for the many people and families who are suffering across my constituency?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I remind Members that they should try to link their supplementary questions to the substantive question, which, in this case, is about the South Antrim constituency. The Minister may or may not be able to reply.

Lord Morrow: South Antrim and West Tyrone are a wee bit apart, but that in no way diminishes the Member's concerns, because what applies in one part of the Province is very often replicated in other parts.

What is happening in his constituency, and I am not being glib, is not much different from what is happening in other regions and areas of Northern Ireland: there is housing stress and housing need in West Tyrone, as there is in South Antrim. Across Northern Ireland, of the applicants on the housing list, 50% are in housing stress. However, I should share one statistic with the Assembly that I found quite difficult to understand when I investigated the matter further. To be put on the housing stress list, you require just 30 points. So, if you have a score above 30 points, you are deemed to be in housing stress. That is a matter that I want to look at to make sure that all those who are really in housing stress and housing need are given the consideration that they deserve.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Social Housing: County Fermanagh

7. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Development how many new social houses were built in County Fermanagh in the 2015-16 financial year. (AQO 9888/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Unfortunately, the information is not available in the format that the Member asked for. I can, however, advise that 47 social houses were completed in the former Fermanagh District Council area in the 2015-16 financial year. Those new homes were built in the Enniskillen area.

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Minister for his answer. There is an old guise that you should never ask a question that you do not know the answer to. The question that I submitted asked the Minister how many social houses had been started in the 2015-16 financial year, but somehow it was changed. What astounds me about the answer is that one social house was started in the whole county in that time, namely a single bespoke unit in Brookeborough.

Can the Minister give me an assurance that there is a commitment to building social houses in rural areas? The perception amongst rural dwellers is that there is no point in adding your name to the social housing waiting list because there is absolutely no expectation that houses will be built in rural communities. I am looking for an assurance from the Minister that those houses may be built in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has asked his question.

Lord Morrow: I can give the Member the assurance that there is no attempt to leave County Fermanagh out of any future social housing development. I say this to him, which he might find useful: there were 82 new social housing starts in the former Fermanagh District Council area between 2010-11 and 2014-15. That equated to a total spend of £9.7 million, of which £4.9 million was made up of housing association grant. Furthermore, the Housing Executive has identified a total projected housing need for the Fermanagh area of 117 units in the period 2014-19, of which 100 units have been identified for Enniskillen. Between April 2016 and March 2019, it is anticipated that a further 137 units will be delivered in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone parliamentary constituency area. I hope that he finds that useful.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That is the end of our period for listed questions. We turn to topical questions.

Social Housing: Grosvenor Barracks, Enniskillen

T1. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he supports the proposed transfer of the site of the former Grosvenor barracks in Enniskillen, which has been earmarked for the development of 200 social housing units, from his Department to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, given that that would remove the ability of social housing providers to develop on that site. (AQT 3671/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I assure the Member that I am not doing anything to obstruct, nor am I being awkward about, the building of new homes in County Fermanagh. After all, and I am sure the Member has noticed, I represent Fermanagh and South Tyrone in the Assembly. As a Member for the area, I am sure that it will come as some comfort and relief to him that very often his concerns about housing are mine.

3.15 pm

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Minister for his attempt to answer the question. I put him on notice that it was not he who initiated the process, but I am looking for him to intervene and stop it as a locally elected representative.

There are roughly 1,000 people on the housing waiting list in Fermanagh, and nearly 300 of those are in stress. As Mrs Kelly indicated, land acquisition is a significant issue for housing associations. Can the Minister indicate whether, in theory, he would be supportive of the transfer of a 17.2-acre site out of his Department to the local authority, which could then decide whether to sell it on the open market, thereby taking away the housing association's ability to deliver on the site?

Lord Morrow: My task and responsibility is to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of social-sector housing right across the Province. Like the Member, I am favourably

disposed to ensuring that includes Fermanagh and South Tyrone. I think that he is trying to dance on a pinhead, but if he wants to talk about the issue, my door is open, and he is welcome to discuss it with me.

Belfast Streets Ahead: Phase 3

T2. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on how his Department intends to develop the Belfast Streets Ahead phase 3 public realm improvement project. (AQT 3672/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department submitted a planning application in April 2015 for the Belfast Streets Ahead phase 3 project. It received approval from the Belfast planning office in November 2015. Subject to additional approvals, economic appraisal and traffic regulation orders, as well as funding, the construction stage of the phase 3 project will take place from early 2017 to mid-2019. Furthermore, my Department continues to work closely with Belfast City Council and the Department for Regional Development to plan for the successful delivery of that phase of the programme by summer 2018.

The estimated cost of the project is around £32 million over four years, and my officials are in discussion with Belfast City Council about a potential contribution toward the cost of the scheme. It has agreed on £5 million in principle, but that is subject to committee ratification following the outcome of the competitive tender.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for his answer. I know that some will make the criticism that the focus is often on Belfast city centre. Can he explain the rationale for continuing to invest in Belfast city centre?

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for her question. When she hears the answer, she may agree with me that there is good rationale for that.

A report by TLT — a top-50 UK law firm — has highlighted untapped potential for retailers here in Northern Ireland, placing us among the top three regions with the greatest opportunities for development. Belfast is the main retail centre here, and the enhancements to the public realm in the city centre delivered through the Belfast Streets Ahead programme have attracted new businesses and investment to the city centre. It is important that we continue to build on that. In addition, the £3 million Bank Square regeneration project has now been completed, and we are already seeing the positive benefits of our investment in that area, with the recent announcement of plans for a new boutique hotel on Bank Street and the regular use of the square for performances, exhibitions and the Folktown artisan market.

Voluntary and Community Sector

T3. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development what he is doing to ensure that, when the new Departments are established, the role of the voluntary and community sector is enhanced, given that, coming from the voluntary and community sector, she is very aware of its valuable work for Northern Ireland, albeit its budgets have been severely cut in recent years by various Departments. (AQT 3673/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Maybe it would be appropriate at this time, as I understand that Anna Lo will not be seeking re-election to the House, for me to wish her well. I had the

honour, or privilege, of serving under her when she was, and still is, Chairperson of the Environment Committee. Despite differing on issues sometimes, I think that we struck up a good workmanlike relationship and just got on with things. I acknowledge the great work that she has done, and I wish her well in the future. I suppose, some time, we might even say that this place will not be the same without her. So, all the best to you, Ms Lo.

In relation to the question; yes, the voluntary sector is a vital one in Northern Ireland. It would not be my desire that it would be made smaller. Indeed, I think there is potential for it to play an even greater role in the affairs of the Province in the days ahead. However, with the incoming new Department, the new Executive, the new Minister and the new intake of Assembly Members, I have to be truthful and say to you that this will be strictly a matter for the new Minister and Department.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for his kind words. I want to thank him too for his always very valuable contribution to the Environment Committee. We definitely had a very good working relationship.

When the voluntary sector is being cut, I think that the role of volunteers is more important than ever before. Would the Minister support the development of policy on active citizenship and volunteering?

Lord Morrow: Yes, I think I would. I am quite happy to say it as briefly as that.

State Pension Age: Impact on Women

T4. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development, after thanking him for his work as Minister at what will be his last Question Time before the election, whether he agrees that women have been adversely affected by the acceleration of the state pension age increase; an appropriate question the week after International Women's Day. (AQT 3674/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for his question. I believe that he is referring to the recent media coverage that criticised the Government for failing to inform women that their state pension age had changed despite the original legislation having been enacted in 1995. While it is unfortunate that some women appear to have been unaware of the change to their state pension age, we must recognise that reform is necessary to ensure that our pension system remains affordable and sustainable in the future.

When the timetable for increasing state pension age was revised in 2012, the original proposal was to increase pension age to 66 by April 2020. This would have meant that some women would see their pension age delayed by up to two years. The proposal was subsequently revised, delaying the increase to 66 to October 2020. This was specifically designed as an easement for those women worst affected by the change. The maximum delay is therefore reduced to 18 months.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his answer. I seek his views on this point. He mentioned the change in the dates for the increase in pension age to 66, from April 2020 to October 2020. Does he believe that that was a cosmetic change by the Government?

Lord Morrow: No, I think that there was a really good reason why it was made. I know that the Member is not speaking from a personal point of view. I want to have another look at that one, and I will come back to the Member on it.

I should say, before I sit down, that it was remiss of me to not acknowledge that Judith Cochrane will not be returning here. I have always found Judith to be very affable, amenable, helpful, encouraging and, sometimes, very educational to talk to.

Causeway Volunteer Centre: Funding Cuts

T5. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister for Social Development how, based on his comments to Ms Lo moments ago, he can justify the decision to further cut core funding for the Causeway Volunteer Centre by 5.7%, which represents a 40% cut since 2011. (AQT 3675/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I seldom try to justify cuts, but sometimes I have to do it. I can tell the Member who asked the question most sincerely that my budget has been cut severely. That was not of my making; it was not what I desired. However, I have to live within budget restraints. Again, if there is an organisation or group in the Member's area that she is particularly concerned about, I urge her to call at room 132 to tell us about it. If there is something we can do, let us hear about it, and we will make an honest attempt to do something.

Ms Sugden: I appreciate the Minister's comments, and I appreciate that his budget has been cut. However, I sometimes think that we are pulling the rug from beneath us by cutting the likes of the community and voluntary sector. If we included them in our public sector, we would make great savings. Has the Minister considered how, in his Department, he can use the community and voluntary sector so that we can save money, instead of making further cuts?

Lord Morrow: The Member makes a salient point, and I think it is a good point: in reality, the voluntary sector often saves money. That point is not missed, and, indeed, when it comes to funding the voluntary sector, that is one of the issues that is analysed and carefully considered. I believe, as I have said to others — I mean this sincerely — that the sector plays a vital role in the communities in which they are based. I suspect that the group that the Member speaks about — maybe there is more than one — is no different. I assure her that that is very much taken into consideration.

Portrush Public Realm Scheme: Update

T6. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Portrush public realm scheme. (AQT 3676/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Yes, I think I can, if I can pick it up here.

In 2011, Coleraine Borough Council commissioned a feasibility study that determined that it was technically possible to build pontoons and extend Portrush harbour to create a marina with up to 220 berths at a potential cost of between £10 million and £14 million. In June 2015, further work was commissioned to determine whether other value-for-money development options were possible. It is anticipated that additional work will be completed by 31 March 2016.

A master plan to explore opportunities for the development of the land side of the harbour is expected to commence in the summer of 2016. In addition, my Department has committed half a million pounds from its 2016-17 capital budget to allow design work to commence on a public realm scheme for Portrush and the redevelopment of Portrush train station. Those projects are time-critical, and it is essential that the capital build elements are completed before the Open Championship in 2019. My Department has also provided funding of £1.5 million for a public realm scheme in Portstewart. That scheme is under way and will be complete by the end of May 2016.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for that answer. He pre-empted my supplementary question: I was going to ask him whether he could be definitive about a start date for the Portrush scheme and whether he could guarantee it would be finished in time for the Open Championship.

Lord Morrow: I will be definitive, and I will give the Member an assurance that every determined effort will be made to ensure that Portrush is looking very slick when that important event comes along in 2019. The Member can go back to Portrush tomorrow and tell everybody that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That is the end of our time for questions to the Minister for Social Development. We now move on to questions to the Assembly Commission.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I advise Members that question 6, 9 and 12 have been withdrawn.

3.30 pm

Parliament Buildings: Energy Efficiency

Mr Hilditch: I apologise for my absence earlier, which was due to three Committees going on at the same time.

1. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Assembly Commission how it plans to make Parliament Buildings more energy-efficient. (AQO 9897/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. The Member will be aware that, in the recently completed roof project, the Assembly Commission took the opportunity to refurbish or replace all of the existing roof-mounted mechanical and electrical services and, where appropriate, to incorporate renewable technologies in the scheme, specifically photovoltaic (PV) panels, rainwater harvesting and solar thermal tubes. Electricity generated by the PV panels is now being used to supplement the Building's energy supply, and some of the hot water supply is provided by means of the solar thermal power.

It was anticipated that these improvements would reduce the Building's energy consumption by a minimum of 25%, and early indications illustrate that savings in excess of that figure have been achieved to date. Other energy-saving initiatives include the introduction of motion-sensor lighting, the replacement of light bulbs in the building with more energy-efficient LED bulbs, the rerouting of pipes and cables for more efficient use and the installation of mains timer sockets where appropriate. The currently

displayed energy certificate for the Building gives us a D rating, and the score has improved from 97 last year to 89 this year, which is an excellent achievement for a building of this nature. The Commission will continue to explore all practical means to increase the energy efficiency of the Building.

Mr Hilditch: I wish the Member well, as I understand that she is not attempting to return to any future mandate. I wish her all the best for the future. Can I ask —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Can the Member direct his microphone? We are not picking up the question.

Mr Hilditch: Sorry. I ask if the Commission can ensure that a much better controlled and efficient heating system is in place for future mandates, as it has been a somewhat controversial one here, with sometimes too much heat.

Mr McCarthy: Hot air.

Mrs Cochrane: I will not comment about hot air. The roof project incorporated an upgraded building management system that controls the heating throughout the Building. Staff monitor the heating at set points across the Building and adjust these when necessary. This system, combined with new boilers and sustainable development in the roof itself, has reduced overall energy consumption by 30%. If the Member has a specific issue with his office and does not want to continue to have to wear his thermal vest in the winter and his string vest in the summer — *[Laughter.]* — I am sure that, if he speaks to the relevant building control staff, they will be able to assist.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. During this mandate, many visitors and Members have commented on the heat in the Building and in the offices, as the Member mentioned. Can the Member tell me the cost of heating the Building each year during this mandate?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. I do not have those exact figures in front of me, although I have said that the costs have come down by 30%. I am sure that I can provide that information to the Member.

Parliament Buildings: Disability Access

2. **Mr Allen** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on how it has improved disability access in Parliament Buildings for Members, staff and visitors since May 2011. (AQO 9898/11-16)

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question. The Member will be aware that, in the recently completed — sorry, I am on the wrong question. Apologies.

The Assembly Commission is determined to make Parliament Buildings accessible to all, and strenuous efforts have been made over a number of years to improve access for people with disabilities. On the ground floor of the Building, a Changing Places facility was installed in 2011, providing fully accessible toilet facilities for people with profound disabilities. Parliament Buildings is one of the few public buildings to have such a facility. In the summer of 2012, the Commission installed front ramped access to Parliament Buildings to ensure that all visitors are able to gain access via the primary entrance to the Building. Parking for people with disabilities is provided in the east and west upper car parks adjacent to the Building,

and we have recently increased the number of spaces available.

The Assembly Commission also holds the Louder Than Words charter mark, which demonstrates its commitment to improve access and services to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In November 2012, the Commission became the first organisation to receive the National Autistic Society autism access award. Minor physical alterations have recently been made to the reception areas in the Business Office and stationery office to improve access for wheelchair users, and changes are proposed in the Members' Bar in the near future.

The Commission has also recently approved a programme of works that will include improvements to the existing lifts and to access from the lower ground floor to ground floor level, particularly for people with physical disabilities. Further improvements, including automatically opening corridor doors, are also planned.

Mr Allen: I thank the Member for her answers. Whilst I place on record my utmost thanks to the Commission and those involved behind the scenes for addressing the accessibility and facility deficiencies in the Building, has the Commission implemented any regular monitoring of access services and facilities to make sure that they are as up to date as possible? It was only when I came into the Building that we recognised that there were a number of deficiencies.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his supplementary. He is absolutely right: until he came into the Building, we had the bare minimum of what was required. It is only through his being here and the invaluable advice that he has given to the Commission on his access around the Building that the massive strides have been made to make this place more disability-friendly and more accessible.

We as a Commission have made a commitment to keep this issue under our power and to keep looking at it — as will the future Commission, whatever it may look like and whoever might be on it — because we know that there are still a lot of things that we could do. We have debated a lot of things in the Commission, which, I have to admit, are based on finances. I know that the Member has been happy, to date, with the actions that have been put in place. On behalf of the Commission, I thank him for all of his help.

Mr G Robinson: Will the Member clarify if there is a first-aid station in the Building?

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question. From memory of having to use it once, I know that we have a first-aid room in the Building; it is on the second floor. You will notice around the Building, signs to do with the first-aiders, who are trained in first aid, who are available in the Building. Again, from memory, I believe that we have at least five defibrillators in the Building. They are stationed on most floors, and people are trained to use them.

Mr McKinney: I thank Mr Allen for his question and the Commission for its answers, which rightly underscore the need for proper provision. Has consideration been given to those who may not be disabled but could have conditions that somehow restrict their movement or ability to access the Building, particularly given that they have to park long distances away from the Building when they come here?

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question. Again, as part of the overall restructuring and looking at disabled access to the Building, extra parking spaces have been provided at the east and west doors, although I do understand that there is a long way to walk within the Building. I do not know how we can overcome that. I do not know whether we can get parking. We cannot get it at the front door, albeit if we could, we would. We may have to look at the back door and the slope as a possibility, or maybe some of the new parking bays at the back are disabled parking bays. It is something that we will continually look at. It is an issue that is fed to members of the Commission by members of our parties, and it is something that will be kept on the agenda, because it certainly has been a difficult building to access over the years.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for her response and, particularly, the provision of the changing places facility in the Building. I can say from personal experience that is vital when it comes to personal hygiene etc. Does the Commission advertise or alert people to that provision being here, because it could mean the difference between people coming or not coming?

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question, which is a very good question. It is one that I am unable to answer as a Commission member, but I can answer it from a personal level. A year ago, I had a visitor in the Building who was paralysed from the neck down and required changing facilities. I was not a Commission member at the time, and I was unaware that we had the changing places room. I had offered my office for his carer to assist in his needs. So, I think you are absolutely right: we need to advertise more that we have those facilities available here.

Usher Services: Staff Reduction

3. **Mr Swann** asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of whether the reduction in staff in Usher Services has had an impact on Members discharging their duties or public access to Parliament Buildings. (AQO 9899/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. Due to budget cuts in recent years, the overall staffing of the secretariat has reduced by some 60 staff. To meet those cuts, the Commission undertook a business efficiency review programme in 2012 and also ran a voluntary exit scheme in 2015. Those have resulted in a decrease in the number of staff in the Usher Services business area. Natural wastage has also been a factor in that decrease. The head of Usher Services, in consultation with colleagues, has, however, realigned some functions in an attempt to ensure that business demand continues to be met and that there has been no impact on Members discharging their duties or restrictions placed on public access to Parliament Buildings. To date, as far as we are aware, that has been successful, but planning is under way for staffing levels in the new financial year to establish how best any vacancies might be filled.

Mr Swann: I thank the Commission member for her answer. I draw to her attention, for any staffing review, the fact that Members have complained to me that, when they were going down to attend activities and publicity events on the apron, the fence gate was locked, and Members were unable to attend the activity on the other side of the

fence. Unlike some Members, I was able to climb over the fence, but I can assure you that I would not advise it.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. It is an interesting point. I will certainly take that back to the relevant director to raise with the head of Usher Services, as we would not want to curtail any Member going down there, and we really do not want to see you hurdling the gate either. However, we also have to maintain a balance of having the gate locked for security reasons. Yes, I will take back that issue.

Social Media Misuse

4. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on secretariat staff on suspension for alleged misuse of social media. (AQO 9900/11-16)

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for his question. While the Assembly Commission does not make any public comment on personnel matters, especially when those matters are ongoing, I can confirm that one member of Assembly Commission staff is currently suspended as part of a disciplinary process involving the alleged misuse of the Commission's social media policy. I can also confirm that, following appropriate investigations under the Commission's disciplinary procedures, three members of staff have been disciplined in respect of breaches of social media policy.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the member for her answer. I completely appreciate that, when we are dealing with personnel, there should be confidentiality. However, in a general sense, will the member assure me and the House that there has been even-handedness in the way in which the matter has been dealt with and that original thought in social media and the use of social media would not be viewed in the same way as retweeting or reusing somebody else's quotations? Obviously, those two things would, in the real world, be viewed as two very different scenarios.

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. The social media policy was introduced to secretariat staff in 2014, and they were provided with training on the policy. The policy covers the acceptable use of social media by staff engaged by the Commission and has a particular focus of maintaining standards of behaviour from all staff and that their impartiality cannot be called into question. The guidance and training provided covered a lot for all members of staff and MLAs in the Building.

Ms Hanna: I thank the member for her answers. Will she advise whether the Commission staff who are involved have had any opportunity to appeal the judgement that was made about their activity on social media?

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for her question. The disciplinary policy includes an appeal mechanism that fully complies with all legislative requirements. It is in process.

Mr Allister: Is it not wholly shameful that a Commission that turns a blind eye to ripping off hundreds of thousands of pounds by a bogus research company then seeks to make an example of easy targets like security staff who apparently retweet some comments by political journalists? Is that not wholly disproportionate?

Is it not time that those staff were relieved of the pressure that has been put on them by the austere approach taken in this matter?

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for his question. It would be wholly inappropriate for me to discuss sensitive information in relation to an ongoing personnel matter.

3.45 pm

Parliament Buildings: Car Parking

5. **Mrs Overend** asked the Assembly Commission when it will take action to resolve permanently the inadequacy of car-parking facilities for staff and visitors in Parliament Buildings. (AQO 9901/11-16)

Mr Gardiner: I thank Mrs Overend for her question. The Assembly Commission recognises the car-parking problems experienced by users of Parliament Buildings. The Commission is aware that some users of Parliament Buildings have experienced difficulty parking on busier days. Facilities directorate has, however, been able to ease the pressure on parking through staffing, some physical realignment of the lower east car park and by virtue of the provision of the overspill car park that came into service in 2011. Those measures provided the Assembly with an additional 40 spaces and have been well received by many car-park users. A further 35 parking spaces, including two for charging electric vehicles, are now available for upper car park users at the rear of Parliament Buildings.

Assembly senior management has already been involved in discussions with DFP to look at the possibility of obtaining further car-parking provision for users of Parliament Buildings. Unfortunately, at this time, DFP reports that there is little prospect of obtaining further spaces in the Stormont estate. However, facilities management will continue to monitor the situation.

Mrs Overend: I thank the commissioner for that response. The provision of 40 additional places was welcome, but that was four years ago. It is clear that more action is needed for members of organisations and members of the public who come to meet MLAs and staff in the Building. Does he agree that it is unacceptable that they have so few spaces and have to park so far away?

Mr Gardiner: I thank Mrs Overend for her further comments. I support her sentiments and thank her for her supplementary. The Commission is aware of the ongoing and often serious parking difficulties at Parliament Buildings. I hope that the next Commission will identify it as an area for consideration with all speed. I hope that that is acceptable to Mrs Overend.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): As I said earlier, question 6 has been withdrawn.

Training for New Members

7. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the induction or capacity-building training that will be provided to new Members in the next mandate. (AQO 9903/11-16)

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for his question. I pay a personal tribute to Mr Maginness at this, his last Question Time. In true, typical Alban fashion, he continues to be concerned for the running of the Assembly and for its Members right up to the last minute. Politics is a profession rather than a vocation, and continuing professional development is as important in political life as it is in any other profession. Therefore, it will be important for

Members newly elected in May 2016 to be provided with an appropriate induction to the business of the Assembly, as well as ongoing professional development to support them in their role as public representatives and legislators.

Supported by the Assembly Commission, Politics Plus is developing a new Member induction programme. It will be implemented following the election in May and focus on the role of the MLA in representing the interests of the electorate and scrutinising the work of the Executive. Whilst the programme has been designed for new Members, returning Members are also free to participate as they require. The induction programme to be delivered by Politics Plus will supplement those already provided by the Business Office on the procedures of the Assembly, including Standing Orders, and by the Bill Office on the legislative process. New Members will also receive induction support from the Assembly's Research and Information Service, Finance Office and Legal Services, as well as other offices of the Assembly as appropriate.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the representative of the Commission for her kind words. I have enjoyed working with Karen McKeivitt and, indeed, with the Commission. In the programme, will there be an emphasis on dealing with legislation, particularly draft legislation? It is a process that needs considerable skill and knowledge. Is that available?

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. The induction programme provided will cover a wide range of areas, including strategic planning; ethical leadership; speech delivery; dealing with difficult conversations and conflict resolution; effective Committee scrutiny; the role of the Committee Chair; analysing complex information; working with the media; using social media; crisis management; managing reputational risk; and the Members' code of conduct. Members attending the induction programme will also receive briefings from employment law specialists, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, and the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

If Members have any further ideas that Commission members can bring to the politics programme, our doors are open, and we would be only too willing, before the end of this mandate, to include any information that they would like included in the programme.

Education Programme: West Tyrone Schools

8. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Assembly Commission to outline how many schools from West Tyrone have taken part in the Assembly's Education Service programme since May 2011. (AQO 9904/11-16)

Mr Gardiner: I thank Mr Buchanan for his question. Between May 2011 and the present, 36 school groups from the West Tyrone constituency, with 900 participants, have availed themselves of the Assembly's Education Service programme through visiting Parliament Buildings. In that same period, the Assembly's Education Service has delivered outreach programmes to six groups in the West Tyrone constituency, involving a total of 768 participants. The Education Service also facilitates Let's Talk events in each constituency on a regular basis. Those events afford an opportunity to older school pupils to question and debate with local politicians at constituency level. You will be pleased at that. All post-primary schools in a constituency are invited. One such event has been held in the West Tyrone constituency in each of the past three years, with

an average of 34 pupils attending each event. Six of the 11 post-primary schools in the area have participated in at least one event.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Member for his response and for outlining the number of events that have taken place in the West Tyrone constituency. Based on the feedback received by the Commission, can the Member outline what benefit the schools have found for pupils in the events?

Mr Gardiner: Thank you for your supplementary. The main Assembly website and the dedicated Education Service website contain all the relevant information for groups wishing to take part in the education programme in Parliament Buildings. The Education Service also has a specific Twitter feed to raise awareness of the service.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 9 has been withdrawn.

Committees: Reduction in Departments

10. **Mr Givan** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the impact the reduction in the number of Executive Departments will have on the resourcing of Assembly Committees. (AQO 9906/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. It is anticipated that the reduction in the number of Departments from 12 to nine will result in an equivalent reduction in the number of Statutory Committees. As a result, the Committee staff complement will be reduced by nine staff. In addition, the Research and Information Service staff complement has been reduced by three, and the staff complement of the Official Report has been reduced by two.

Mr Givan: As we welcome the reduction in the number of Departments and the reduction in the number of MLAs at a future election, how much money can we anticipate the reductions saving the taxpayer, who has to fund this institution?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. The savings that I will refer to are specifically in this Building, but, until the new staffing structures have been finalised, I cannot give you a completely accurate figure.

However, the release of staff across the Assembly under the voluntary exit scheme will save more than £800,000 per year, and the reduction in complement arising from the changes in the number of Committees has facilitated a significant proportion of those savings.

Mr Dickson: In respect of the reduction in the number of staff to reflect the reduction in the number of Committees, can the Commission indicate that it took into account that the remit and depth of the work of those Committees will be substantially more than the existing Committees? While there is to be a reduction in staff, can we be assured that it will reflect the additional work that those Committees will have?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there is appropriate support for all Committees, the reduction in the staffing complement that we have already started to progress means there will be limited opportunity to take further account of the increased remit of a number of the new Statutory Committees.

The Commission regularly reviews the services that we provide, and I am sure that the new Commission

will keep this under review and reassess our budgetary priorities. I am sure that the important scrutiny work of the Committees will not be overlooked.

Parliament Buildings: Lit Up

11. **Mr Girvan** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the dates in 2016 that Parliament Buildings will be lit up in support of good causes. (AQO 9907/11-16)

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question. At its meeting on 11 November 2014, the Assembly Commission agreed the policy for the external lighting of Parliament Buildings in order to manage the use of the system while preserving the dignity of Parliament Buildings.

In line with the policy, the Commission scheduled up to four days during the calendar year for events of its choice. In 2016, the four days chosen were Monday 8 March, International Women's Day, when it is lit up purple; Thursday 17 March, St Patrick's Day, when it will be lit up green; Tuesday 12 July, when it will be lit up orange; and Friday 11 November, Remembrance Day, when it will be lit up red.

The Assembly charity of the year for 2016, Positive Futures, is allowed five days during its 12-month term. To date, no additional requests have been granted in relation to the other eight days scheduled for events in support of charitable, community and non-profit organisations during the calendar year. Such requests will be considered by the Commission as and when they are received.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Member for her answer. Part of the reason I asked the question is that there is a fear that it could be used by others to make a political statement. Are criteria set down to ensure that it is for charitable events as well, such as autism and organisations such as that?

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. In line with the policy, only events organised at Parliament Buildings or within the Stormont estate that are DFP-approved will have access to the lighting system. Only charitable, community or non-profit organisations based in or having a significant connection to Northern Ireland, and celebrating a significant anniversary — for example, first, fifth, tenth, twenty-fifth etc — or an occasion, may be permitted to have Parliament Buildings illuminated in their special colour.

Women in Politics

13. **Mr McCartney** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the action it will take to encourage women into politics. (AQO 9909/11-16)

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for his question. We got to the end of Question Time and got them all in. Mr Deputy Speaker, could I have an additional minute to answer the question?

It is an obvious fact that women are under-represented in political and public life. The evidence is there. We have too few female MLAs and woefully too few women on boards of public bodies while we have men who sit on multiple boards.

Returning to the question, in 2015, the Assembly Commission, through Politics Plus, established a Women in Politics programme. The programme was aimed at female elected representatives in order to provide support for the development of their political careers,

and, particularly, it was to encourage female councillors to put themselves forward for elections and to build links between local and central government. It is anticipated that a second cohort of that programme will be commissioned in 2016-17.

4.00 pm

A young female leaders academy was launched in October 2015. Its purpose is to create awareness of the added value that women bring to the public and political sphere. Through this initiative, the young women will learn about the opportunities that are available to them, particularly in political life, through shaping policy and instigating positive change. The Speaker is also responsible for leading Assembly Women's Week. Assembly Women's Week was an initiative brought forward by the Speaker to not only mark International Women's Day 2016 but to end the mandate of the Assembly with a positive focus on improving female representation in the Assembly and public life generally.

In addition to the above programmes, in February this year the Speaker established a reference group on a gender-sensitive Assembly to advise him and future Speakers on initiatives and programmes that enhance the role of women in political and public life. The reference group includes MLAs from each of the five Executive parties, as well as one representing the smaller parties and independent Members.

Most recently, the Assembly women's caucus was established and launched last week. That is a huge step forward in demonstrating our commitment to supporting women who enter politics. The members of the caucus will work together, irrespective of political party affiliation, to ensure that the political culture of the Assembly is more reflective of the gender balance in our wider society. The caucus will also provide an additional driving force to support and encourage more women to enter political life. This Assembly Commission is justifiably proud of the actions it has taken to encourage women into politics.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That is the end of this, the final Question Time of this Assembly. I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Executive Committee Business

Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill: Legislative Consent Motion

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly agrees that the Westminster Parliament should consider the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February 2016, dealing with the power in clause 1(4) of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two members of the Independent Reporting Commission; and the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly contained in clause 9. — [Mrs Pengelly (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister).]

Mr Allen: The Ulster Unionist Party supports progress. We support moves to bring an end to paramilitarism in all its forms in Northern Ireland; to frustrate and close down associated criminality; to free communities from suppression; and to support those who genuinely want to move down a peaceful path. It is very welcome to see that we will now have an extension of the period for the appointment of Ministers, which will allow two weeks for negotiations of the Programme for Government (PFG).

In our 2011 manifesto, the Ulster Unionist Party proposed that we totally change our approach to drawing up the Programme for Government. We proposed that it be negotiated before everyone took up their positions in Departments and the silo mentality set in. We believe that will be a hugely positive change in how we do business that could vastly improve the outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland, and we are delighted that other parties have come round to our idea and that we are now seeing it become a reality.

I should also point that we do not think the Bill is perfect.

We tabled a number of amendments to the Bill at Westminster that we believe could have improved it, such as amending the definition of a victim and changing the method of election for the First Minister and deputy First Minister. There are gaps, and opportunities for improvements have not been taken. I think that, with hindsight, we will regret not taking those opportunities.

Mr Allister: Following on from Mr Attwood's contribution before Question Time, I join in wishing you, Mr Deputy Speaker, a long and happy retirement. The relief that comes, I am sure, from escaping this place will be most enjoyable. I want to record my appreciation for your courtesy to me, even when I have stretched your patience. I think that you have performed your role in a very credible and suitable way. So, best wishes in that regard.

I turn to the subject in hand: the Provisional IRA indisputably is a paramilitary organisation. It is one that the Chief Constable advised us, just over six months ago, had murdered again. It is one that a government panel, after studying all relevant data, advised us still exists, still has access to arms and still has an army council. The

First Minister, back in September, correctly advised us that Sinn Féin is inextricably linked to the Provisional IRA. Yet what we are being asked to consent to today is that the deputy First Minister should be inextricably linked to the appointment of commissioners who are supposedly going to independently review paramilitary behaviour. I do not consent to that. I do not think it at all appropriate that one of that ilk, identified as the leadership of a party that his partner, the First Minister, says is inextricably linked to the IRA, should have any hand in any such appointments.

Of course, the situation is more ludicrous when that same individual and that same party deny, in face of all the evidence and in face of death on our streets, that the IRA even exists. And so we have this remarkable situation where supposedly credible bodies are to be established to monitor the activities of paramilitary organisations, of which the Provisional IRA has always been chief, yet one of the sponsors of that situation and one of the appointers — one of those making the appointments — is someone who not only is affiliated with such an organisation, according to the First Minister, but cannot even honestly admit the existence of that organisation. What a farce. Of course, two of the four appointments are to be made by OFMDFM. Points have been made that they would be more appropriately made by the Department of Justice, but we all know why they are being made by OFMDFM. It is very simple. It is one for the DUP, and one for Sinn Féin. It is so that they, who are inextricably linked, according to the First Minister, to one of the paramilitary organisations supposedly going to be monitored, have the luxury of appointing a placeman to the monitoring body.

That is how ludicrous and absurd this proposition from Fresh Start is. Yet, no doubt, this House, as it swept murder under the carpet, will sweep the absurdity of that under the carpet today and nod through that ludicrous, absurd situation. I, for one, do not consent to such appointments. I regard them as an insult to the many innocent victims of that and other paramilitary organisations.

The other proposition that we are asked to consent to, I do concur with. It is quite clear, after the shenanigans of this time last year, with fantasy Budgets and all that nonsense, that the Treasury decided that it was time to rein-in Stormont in regard to future budgetary arrangements, and rightly so. Therefore, in this Bill, there are restraints, requirements and expectations to be met in budgetary terms. I think that that is necessary, and I certainly consent to that. But, as for the first: not in my name, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mrs Pengelly (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I am grateful for Members' contributions to this debate. I will speak for a short while on those contributions. I welcome the support of the Committee, as outlined by the Deputy Chair, Mr Chris Lyttle.

I want to thank my colleague Mr Gordon Lyons for his support. He is not in the Chamber, but I thank him for support in relation to this matter and also for his valuable work on a range of issues arising from Fresh Start and his very constructive contributions, not only in this debate, but in relation to various matters arising from the Fresh Start Agreement.

I turn to the comments of Mr Alex Attwood. I have read through the amendments that the SDLP put down in the House of Commons, so I know that it has been very active in laying those amendments and in its scrutiny of this legislation. He raises points in relation to the appointments process. Certainly, we want to maximise confidence and ensure the effectiveness of this commission. I have heard his point. This is a legislative consent motion, and the Bill itself has substantively gone through its processes in another place. However, we are supportive of the proposal to consult with the Justice Minister in relation to these appointments. In that, we are balancing efficiency and effectiveness with what is workable. With the First Minister and deputy First Minister making those appointments, in consultation with the Justice Minister, it represents well in excess of 70 Members of the House. So we have tried to ensure and maximise buy-in, insofar as is workable.

Mr Attwood raises points in relation to the Budget issue. I welcome — I think we should all welcome — the focus on living within our means. It is absolutely critical for the future of Northern Ireland, the Assembly and the Executive that we take a strong and sensible approach to the Budget. Unfortunately, we have not always seen that or had that demonstrated. However, I think that these new proposals will enhance that. We must live within our means; that is positive and welcome, and it will create additional transparency. The Member refers to attempts to increase knowledge on these matters. I would say that it is not only welcome to increase knowledge; it is absolutely essential that there is increased knowledge in this Chamber and in our local democratic institutions.

Mr Attwood raises matters in relation to the pledge. Despite what he has said, it is not a devolved matter, therefore I will not go into the detail of that.

I turn to the matters raised by the Ulster Unionist Party Member Andy Allen.

I step back in amazement at the attempts by the Ulster Unionist Party to take credit for the good things, while, in fact, it walked away, gave up responsibility and took the opportunity to critique and criticise from the sidelines. Government is difficult, and perhaps it was too difficult for some who were originally in the Executive. However, I can give the Member a commitment that we will continue to fight for what is best for Northern Ireland by doing all that we can to make Northern Ireland work. That is about sticking with it, working hard and making improvements. That is what we are doing today in the latest of a long line of necessary improvements to the system.

4.15 pm

In relation to the comments from the Member for North Antrim Mr Jim Allister, we will continue to negotiate and secure the best for everyone in Northern Ireland. We firmly believe that that is devolved government, local democratic accountability in the form that we have it and building a new future, not wallowing in the past but doing everything we can to support victims and provide the best chance of justice.

Today, we heard the tragic news of the death of the prison officer caught up in the recent disgraceful terrorist and criminal act just off the Cregagh Road. That has no place in the new Northern Ireland that we are trying to build. It is wrong, and it must stop. My sympathies lie with the

family, friends and local community, who, I know, are in shock at the news. That is why we must continue to make democracy work, no matter how difficult it is. We cannot and should not go back to the days when such barbaric and criminal acts were common. We are committed to building a better future in which such atrocious acts are crushed out and removed.

I thank Members for their contributions and for the questions and issues that they have raised. I hope that I have been able to answer some of those, at least, to their satisfaction. 'A Fresh Start' has provided a basis for addressing some of our most challenging and intractable issues. It does not resolve them all, but it is a positive step forward. I can give a commitment to many, including victims and survivors in Northern Ireland, that we will continue to strive to resolve the outstanding issues. The positive moves brought forward by 'A Fresh Start' continue to fulfil our commitment to move forward with strong leadership in order to build a better future for all in Northern Ireland. I ask, therefore, for the continued support of Members to allow these provisions of the Bill, which require the Assembly's consent, to proceed.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly agrees that the Westminster Parliament should consider the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February 2016, dealing with the power in clause 1(4) of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two members of the Independent Reporting Commission; and the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly contained in clause 9.

Fisheries Bill: Final Stage

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I beg to move

That the Fisheries Bill [NIA 74/11-16] do now pass.

I am pleased that the Bill has reached its Final Stage and that, as a result of this small but important Bill, we will be able to avoid the threat of infraction as a result of non-compliance with aspects of the common fisheries policy. As I have said before in the Assembly, I am disappointed that more of the package of new measures in the Bill as introduced will not be enacted, in the short term at least. Those measures would have helped to ensure that fisheries legislation in the North remained fit for purpose and that we could continue to protect fish stocks and sensitive aquatic environments. However, I recognise the time constraints on the Assembly as a result of the Bill being introduced so late in the mandate. I acknowledge that there was limited time for the Assembly and the ARD Committee in particular to consider the Bill in depth and in adequate detail. While I had hoped that some of the less controversial or less complicated aspects might have been considered, I am grateful that the key and most urgent aspect has had the support of Members and is retained in the Bill before us today. It remains my hope, of course, that any matters not taken forward this time will be brought forward in a future mandate.

I am pleased to have worked with the Agriculture Committee to introduce the power to amend the Fisheries Act 1981 in order that EU common fisheries policy rules will be directly enforceable in the North without the need for additional legislation. During the Bill's development, the EU Commission asked why such rules were not already directly enforceable here and threatened to take action as a result of our inability to do so. As stated by my officials during a presentation to the Agriculture Committee on 12 January and formally notified to the Committee in writing on 14 January, the EU has confirmed that the threat will be removed as soon as the Bill is enacted. In addition, as a result of the Bill, there will be a reduction in the number and length of pieces of subordinate legislation required to implement the CFP. It is hoped that freeing resources from having to make such legislation could, in the longer term, mean that more resources can be put into regulating the inshore area, which will, I believe, be welcomed by many in the industry.

The Bill will allow my Department to concentrate limited resources on issues important to the fishing industry rather than on the replication of EU regulations in local legislation. In support of better regulation, some statutory rules or parts of statutory rules could also, in time, be revoked. More importantly, of course, without the change made by the Bill, my Department would find it challenging to continue to implement EU legislation by the required deadlines.

It is important to note that there should be no concerns for the industry as a result of the Bill. Fishermen or others who are already regulated under the CFP will see little change. The Bill simply alters the legislative basis on which the contravention of certain EU laws will be enforced. Furthermore, as my Department is required to operate in a way that is fully compatible with EU law, the direct application of such rules as a result of the Bill will mean that there can be no scope for gold-plating.

Finally, while there will be no need to make new domestic regulations every time EU legislation changes, my Department will continue to engage with the industry early in the EU legislative process, and stakeholders will continue to feed into the policy and legislation development process.

As I said, I am pleased that the Bill has reached Final Stage and that we have retained the key clause that will ensure that we avoid the threat of infraction. I thank the Agriculture Committee and other Members for their support during the Bill's passage. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr Irwin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): The Bill now at Final Stage is obviously very different from the one introduced by the Minister in December last year, which contained 19 clauses and made important provisions regarding the regulation of sea and inland fisheries. However, the Committee had serious concerns about the introduction of the Bill so late in the parliamentary cycle and about the impact that that might have on the time available to conduct proper scrutiny. The Committee is pleased that the Minister accepted and acknowledged those concerns.

After discussions with the Minister, the Committee quickly established that clause 6 was the most urgent provision. It provides for the direct application of most EU fisheries regulations as soon as they come into operation, thereby eliminating any threat of infraction proceedings by the European Commission. An agreement was reached with the Minister that she would take forward at Consideration Stage only the clauses that the Committee was content that it had had time to thoroughly consider — clause 6 and clause 19.

This outcome was a positive example of the Committee and the Minister working together to address an urgent issue without compromising the best interests of those working in the fishing industry. The Committee is very aware that the clauses not moved at Consideration Stage contained many important provisions. We look forward to those being brought before the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in the new mandate. On behalf of the Committee, I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to speak at Final Stage. Coming from South Down, which has ports such as Kilkeel, Ardglass and the neighbouring port of Portavogie, I think that we should not underestimate the importance of the fishing industry, not alone for those areas but for the wider agrifood industry and our economy in general.

From the outset, the Bill has sought to modernise enforcement powers and provide greater legal clarity to ensure a balance between the protection of our natural habitat and the development of our fishing business. That balance is critical to ensuring that the industry has a successful future. During Committee Stage, Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage, the Bill changed significantly.

It quickly became apparent that the Committee did not have the full authority to interrogate the Bill and, due to that, there would be no time to scrutinise the Bill in its entirety. The Bill was then salvaged when the Minister made it clear that the Bill was necessary to comply with EU procedures and to create a parallel legislative provision for Northern Ireland that would apply EU fishery control regulations as soon as they came into effect.

I welcome the work between the Minister and the Committee that followed and believe that it was a positive example of legislative cooperation. It now means that our fishermen will not be punished for infractions of European obligations.

The issues that the Bill initially tried to tackle that could not be tackled due to time constraints and relevant Committee remits still affect our current practices. New legislation that updates areas of sea fisheries, inland fisheries, licensing and penalties must be dealt with, and it is unfortunate that we are unable to deal with them at this time. With the new departmental structure and the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, I am positive that those issues will be dealt with. If elected in the new mandate, I look forward to continuing my engagement with fishermen, the fishing industry and with Assembly colleagues to deliver that new legislation.

Finally, regardless of what the Fisheries Bill initially intended, or what it finally became, it will still deliver a better outcome for Northern Ireland at the end of this mandate. In the end, it may not be the catch of the day, but it is a good supper.

Mrs Dobson: How do you follow that? I imagine that most Ministers would be slightly embarrassed to have presided over a Bill like this. Having gone from what was, only weeks ago, a 19-clause Bill about ensuring protection for our marine and inland aquatic environments, in the end, we have been left with today's sorry state of affairs. Given all the time and energy that went into consulting on the original proposals in the Bill, it was only through sheer incompetence that the Department waited until the very last moment to introduce a Bill. Even then, the majority of proposals in it came far too late. Therefore, we have been left with just a single clause that deals with the enforcement of EU rules.

Let us not fool ourselves: if Europe was not likely to come in and slap a major infraction penalty on us, even that single issue would not be before us in the Chamber today. Of course, as I have said before, that would not have been the first time that DARD's ineptitude has brought infraction fines to the door of the Executive. The fact that the Department belatedly realised the importance of the clause is some comfort at least, and it may, at long last, have started to learn from its mistakes.

Mrs O'Neill: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank those Members who made positive contributions to the debate today and throughout the course of discussions in recent debates. As we come to the end of the mandate, we have had it all in this short debate: jokes from this corner and negativity from that corner. But, sure, c'est la vie.

I thank everybody for their contributions to the debate; they have been very useful. We have a way to go, but what we have achieved is good for the industry. There are other areas that we will come back to, now that we have done the work on all the other issues that we wish to look at, but that is a job for the new mandate. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Fisheries Bill [NIA 74/11-16] do now pass.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I ask the House to take its ease for a moment.

4.30 pm

Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill: Final Stage

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I beg to move

That the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill [NIA 71/11-16] do now pass.

I am pleased to bring the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill before the Assembly today for its Final Stage. When I announced, on 23 June 2014, my intention to legislate on the issue within the remainder of the Assembly mandate, I was aware that that was a very challenging target, but I was convinced of the need to take action on the issue.

The damage that bullying can cause in the lives of children and young people can be profound and long-lasting. Too many young people continue to struggle with the problem. I committed my Department to the challenge and asked my officials to work closely with stakeholders and the Assembly to do everything possible to secure the successful passage of the Bill. Today — the final sitting day of this mandate — we have reached the final milestone.

It is only fair that I acknowledge the goodwill and efforts of the Education Committee and Members of the House in bringing the Bill to this point. Members will be well aware that the House is sometimes portrayed in the media as being too slow to act. The Bill, and the support that it has received throughout its passage, exemplifies how we can react quickly, effectively and with a unity of purpose to address issues of real importance for our citizens.

I am already on record as stating that schools already take their responsibilities for discipline, good behaviour and pastoral care very seriously. School inspections confirm that the vast majority of our schools already meet those duties to a very high standard. This is not a situation where sweeping change was required; rather, the Bill was drafted to provide a clear and consistent framework for all schools to follow, and, in doing so, to ensure that all pupils are protected to the same high standards. By providing an inclusive definition of “bullying”, introducing a duty for schools to record all incidents of bullying and in strengthening the role of boards of governors in ensuring that effective policies are followed in their school, the Bill achieves that goal.

During its scrutiny, the Education Committee specifically singled out the problem of cyberbullying, which can often occur outside of school but the impacts of which inevitably carry on into school the next day, limiting the ability of its victim to learn effectively and take part fully in school life. Cyberbullying can quickly become a criminal matter. In serious cases of cyberbullying, I believe that the correct response is that the PSNI is called in to investigate them properly. Nonetheless, I was happy to take on board the Education Committee's concern on this issue. The Bill will now provide a clear legal basis for schools to address cyberbullying by taking whatever action they deem reasonable to respond in each case. If less serious incidents can be resolved at school level before they escalate into criminal actions, that can only be to the benefit of everyone involved.

Much has already been said about the need for the Department to provide robust guidance to accompany the Bill and to ensure that the training needs of governors,

principals and staff were carefully considered and addressed before the commencement of the new provisions. Following the passage of the Bill, the Department intends to engage extensively with teachers, principals, parents and key stakeholders to ensure that the supporting guidance offers clear advice on all areas of concern that they may have and that any identified training needs are properly met.

Before colluding — concluding — I apologise to the House for it having to wait on my entrance. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr Weir (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I note the last remarks of the Minister; for once, he was accusing himself of collusion rather than concluding.

I will initially speak on behalf of the Committee as part of the Final Stage of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill. If we are looking at the issue of education Bills, there is a great temptation to compare them to buses: you wait for a very long time for any to come along and then three come along virtually at once. However, I am glad to say that we have at least been able to complete all three of those Bills, which, I think, will be very useful to the wider educational landscape. Indeed, today marks the Final Stage of the anti-bullying Bill. It comes hot on the heels of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill and the Shared Education Bill. I think that all of those are very positive developments.

Notwithstanding the remarks this morning, busy though these final few days and weeks have been for Committees and in plenary, I think this is a very positive and noteworthy achievement for the House. The Bill is a particularly welcome example of good law made better by the good offices of the Assembly. I place on record the Committee's thanks for the work that has gone on with the Minister and the Department and for their cooperation. We have worked collectively to try to make the best possible legislation. As with all these things, I think it was very useful that, on all sides, there was that little bit of flexibility that has enabled us to bring the Bill to this key stage.

The Committee felt that the Bill provides an important and workable definition of bullying in schools. It sets out reasonable and clear expectations for boards of governors. It will empower them to adopt good practice in tackling new and changing bullying challenges, including, as the Minister mentioned, cyberbullying on the Internet and social media. It will help the Department to devise evidence-based policy. Above all, I think, the Bill respects the good work undertaken in many schools to address bullying, and it will promote a culture of no tolerance for unacceptable behaviour in all schools.

During the various stages of the legislation, I referred to the victims of bullying and how they should take heart that the Committee and the Minister were listening and that we would do something to make a change. I think the Bill will mark a watershed in the consistent treatment of bullying victims within schools. Members and the Minister may very well recall the passage of these provisions as a key positive achievement. They would be right to do so. This is a good Bill. The Assembly, through its various stages, has made it better. On behalf of the Committee, I commend it to the House and indicate the Committee's assent that the Final Stage do now pass.

I will now speak very briefly as a Member, although I do not dissent from anything the Committee has said. We have all seen the sometimes tragic and devastating impact of bullying on individuals. Indeed, in some tragic cases, we have seen some young people lose or take their life as a result of bullying. Any steps we take on this are a very positive way forward.

There was a choice to be made at one stage of the Bill — it was suggested by at least one stakeholder — about whether we should talk about eradicating bullying. I think it is important that we do not give false expectations. We are about combating bullying and doing all we possibly can to prevent it, but if there was a single piece of legislation that could simply eradicate it and wipe it off the face of the earth, I suspect there would be unanimity in the Chamber on that. However, if there were a simple legislative device that could do that, I think predecessors would probably have used it years ago. It is about trying to ensure that we have the best possible series of interventions, monitoring and use of information to combat bullying. From that point of view, there is no silver bullet that will simply solve the problem, but we are taking steps that will very much make a difference. Legislation cannot cure all these problems.

As the Minister indicated, the next steps will be the guidance that is issued by the Department, and we look forward to that. Crucially, no matter what the House does, there are the critical actions of what happens on the ground in schools on a day-to-day basis. We believe that schools will meet and be up to the challenge. I mentioned that there is not a single solution to this or something that will eradicate it. However, what we can do is do the best that we can.

At times in the House, we will have disagreements about many different things. However, I think that, when we pass this anti-bullying legislation to try to make a real difference to the lives of young people in particular throughout Northern Ireland, we can all look back collectively on this as being a very good day for the Assembly. We will have completed a good day's work when we pass the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome this opportunity to speak. Similar to the Chair, at the outset, I thank the Committee staff and the Clerk for all the support and guidance that they have given us on not just this Bill but, as the Chair said, the SEN Bill and the Shared Education Bill, which we also worked on in recent months. The work that they do to go through each of these and to provide support to the Committee is much needed. I put on record my thanks to Peter and his team for that.

I am not sure whether the Minister will frame copies of this Bill and the other two for good keeping in future years, but it is important to congratulate him and the Department for safely seeing through in the last number of months what I think are three very important pieces of legislation that really will make a difference to young people's lives.

I was very fortunate to be speaking with schoolchildren earlier, and they were asking questions about we do during the day. I explained that today we were going to speak on this Bill, and they were all very interested because bullying, of course, is a live issue in schools. Their teachers were also interested. That helped to bring to life what we do here. This is the last day of plenary business, but the Bill is a perfect example of what we should be doing. It was

a great privilege to sit on the Committee and work on this Bill and on the two previous Bills. Congratulations to the Minister and the Department for seeing them through.

There is no need to labour on the dangers and effects of bullying; we know how lethal it can be. The same applies when we talk about how schools deal with it. It is fair to say that the majority of schools have good systems in place; they know that it is a very important issue and want to deal with it. Taking the words of the Minister, it is not so much about having a revolution on this, it is about disseminating good practice and providing a good and inclusive definition of bullying, a clear framework and a recording system. It is important to record all these incidents so that we can provide the data to those who set policies in future years on what we need to do next to take another step forward. If we cannot eradicate it entirely, we can make the classroom an even safer place to be.

Two things, finally. On the issue of cyberbullying and the notion of the classroom, I welcome the fact that the Department and the Minister were flexible and took on board some of the Committee's comments. I do not think it was ever within the gift of this piece of legislation to deal effectively with cyberbullying as a whole. However, it at least gives a platform to schools to say, "Be cognisant of this issue. Take it on board". Boards of governors now have to discuss it, so let us see what sort of ideas they come up with to tackle it. Our classrooms are changing all the time. More and more, we are moving away from books towards iPads and other good electronic tablets. That is what we need to be aware of. More and more children are engaging in this. The Safeguarding Board is doing an awful lot of work on this, but it was important that it was included in the Bill.

Finally, as the Minister said, the critical step now is engaging with the education sector as a whole around the guidance and taking that forward. It is going to be the dissemination of good practice and everybody talking to each other, learning the lessons, looking at where things are done well, looking at how we can roll that out across the board and deciding what sort of guidance is best to use. I finish by congratulating the Minister and the Department for seeing this through. I thank the Committee staff for all their help. As I said, it has been a great privilege to work on this.

Mrs Overend: I am pleased to rise in support of the Final Stage of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party.

This is an important piece of legislation which aims to create uniformity of practice across all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland in how they address bullying and how it is reported. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce bullying and make sure that improvements can be made and that all schools carry out that work. There is a lot of good work already ongoing in many schools across Northern Ireland, but, importantly, that work is now required in all schools. It is important that schools are proactive on the issue of bullying, and therefore guidelines of good behaviour, pastoral care, Internet safety and other such policies must be focused on and regularly updated.

While there was much discussion throughout the Committee Stage on the definition of bullying, the definition in the Bill is quite loose. The guidelines to be issued by the Department will need to provide clear help to

the schools. I look forward to seeing those guidelines. The reporting mechanism will be an important tool for schools to enable them to look back and analyse incidents over a period of time and see what can be done differently or better when dealing with particular types of bullying.

Cyberbullying has become quite a buzzword and is, anecdotally, on the increase. I am particularly glad that the method of bullying is going to be recorded, so that schools will be able to state categorically whether that is the case. Physical and verbal bullying may be considered to be the most prevalent, but it is worth getting the data recorded.

4.45 pm

I referred to cyberbullying simply because our young people spend so much of their time with an electronic gadget in front of them. It is not that we need to discourage our young people from using those gadgets; it is about embracing and accepting them as a way of life. It is important that we take into consideration how life changes for our young people, and, for that reason it is important that our regulations and guidelines are updated regularly.

I conclude by welcoming the Final Stage of the Bill. I congratulate all those involved in drafting and scrutinising it. As a member of the Committee, I particularly enjoyed going through the detail of the Bill, and I am glad that we have come to this conclusion.

I extend to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and all other Members retiring from this place today every good wish for the future.

Mr Lunn: Like others, I rise to welcome the Final Stage of the Bill. It is a Bill that the Assembly needed to pass. I have heard it said that we are formalising what most good schools do anyway, but it needed to be formalised. Now we have proper processes laid down, a proper definition and a proper list of motivations. In particular, we have finally managed to highlight the situation around cyberbullying and to begin the process of recognising what a serious problem it is. I remember the statistic quoted during our deliberations that about 16% of bullying incidents took place on the Internet. I think that figure is the wrong way round, actually; it is probably more like 61%. However, the Bill at least recognises the problem, and we look forward to the regulations, advice and guidance from the Department in the new mandate.

The last five years have not been what I would call a golden age for education legislation. The Chairman compared it to waiting for a bus and then two or three come along at once. At least we have managed, in recent times, to pass four significant pieces of legislation. In the mandate about to finish, the biggest failure was perhaps the Education and Skills Authority Bill. That did not come to pass, but, at least, we have its little brother, the Education Authority. Then there was the Shared Education Bill, which, of course, I welcome, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, which is every bit as significant as the Bill we are now talking about, if not more. We are where we are. There is a lot more work to be done by those who come back in a few weeks' time.

Like others, I pay tribute to all the work done by Peter and the other Committee staff, who have been very diligent. In fact, they do most of the work for us, and then we rubber-stamp it. That is democracy for you.

While I am on my feet, I would like to pay a compliment to the Minister. I have known him as a fellow Committee member and then as Minister for the last five years. He has been very cooperative in this type of exercise. He has always been approachable and willing to listen. I cannot remember the last time he accepted one of my amendments, but that is by the way. I suppose that is the fault of the amendments rather than of the Minister. I wish him well in whatever Sinn Féin decide to do with him.

Mrs D Kelly: I have a few suggestions. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Lunn: I might have been coming to that, but the moment has passed. While I am on my feet, Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish you all the best. I hope that you have a long and happy retirement; you certainly deserve it.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): After all that, I call the Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, to conclude the Final Stage.

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that there has been collusion on this subject. It shows that, when we work together, we can produce positive changes in the lives of the young people we serve.

The anti-bullying legislation is important. It gives our young people confidence that we take the subject seriously, gives a direction for our schools and our school leaders and ensures that there are policies and legislation in place to assist and support schools in dealing with bullying and challenge them when they are not dealing with it properly. The Committee Chair stated that no one here is naive enough to believe that we can eradicate bullying through this legislation, but we will certainly give it the attention it deserves and ensure that there is a remaining focus on it. As I said, many schools have good practice and are leading the way on these issues, and others need a certain amount of catch-up.

I thank the Committee for all its hard work. I thank the Committee Clerk for all his hard work and that of his team. I also thank my officials, who have worked extensively and very hard to ensure that the Bill has managed to go through all the stages in time. The Committee and I, as Minister, were kept informed, and we dealt with this in a way that has ensured that, even though this is the last opportunity and the last day, given Members' comments today, we will see the successful conclusion of the Bill and it will become an Act.

The challenge for the next Minister is to bring forward the guidance, training and support for schools before the Bill becomes an Act. I have confidence that, regardless of who the Minister will be or which party appoints the Minister, it will all be achievable.

I wish Members who are retiring well, including those who may be retiring but not through their own choice, as we face the election. I wish the Deputy Speaker well in his retirement. He has given many years to public service and deserves the opportunity to retire.

I want to end on a positive note. I thank Mr Lunn for his kind words, and I heard what Mrs Kelly said as well. I am sure that her intentions for me are good. While we have not passed a significant amount of legislation, we have passed significantly important legislation, which gives us a building block for policies and so on. I am of the view, rightly or wrongly, that you do not always require legislation to move a policy direction forward. We have opportunities

for policies and those sorts of things, but, when we require legislation, it can be delivered and achieved. We can have confidence in ourselves to ensure that we can pass legislation through the House that does not have the capacity to damage minorities, citizens or people who are being represented. When we work together, we can achieve change. I wish everyone well for the future and thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill [NIA 71/11-16] do now pass.

Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill: Final Stage

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): I beg to move

That the Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill [NIA 60/11-16] do now pass.

I welcome this further opportunity to speak about my Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Bill, which consists of 91 clauses and eight schedules and is significant and necessary legislation.

A new HMO definition and associated exceptions now provide clarification of what is or is not to be classed as an HMO. The provisions will enable better regulation of houses in multiple occupation and is designed to better protect tenants by ensuring that landlords and managing agents meet important obligations on the quality and safety of HMO accommodation. Before I move on to highlight briefly the Bill's elements, I thank the Chair and members of the Social Development Committee, who have taken considerable care in scrutinising its provisions, which has helped to strengthen and improve the Bill. I tabled a number of amendments that were passed at previous stages, and I am grateful to Members for supporting them.

Houses in multiple occupation are the only housing option for many people, so it is vital that they are properly regulated. The higher risks of living in an HMO mean that they are subjected to a higher level of regulation than other rented housing.

I wish briefly to mention some of the main provisions of the Bill. First, it will introduce a mandatory licensing scheme that will ensure higher physical and management standards for HMO accommodation. That means that landlords will be required to obtain a licence before an HMO can be operated. To obtain a licence, planning permission will have to be in place, which will address the future risks of HMO over-provision.

The introduction of a statutory fit-and-proper-person test requirement is an important step that will ensure that people who are unsuitable to hold a licence and operate an HMO are identified at the earliest opportunity and prevented from doing so.

I fully recognise the importance of linking HMO regulation with other critical government functions, such as planning, building control and environmental health, which is the reason why this new scheme will transfer responsibility for regulating HMOs to councils. I am determined to maximise all opportunities to improve the quality of the private rented sector, and, as council environmental health departments already lead on all other aspects of regulation of the private rented sector, the future operation of this new regulatory scheme by councils will sit neatly with those functions. The new regulatory approach includes a new power to open statutory information-sharing gateways with a number of government and non-government organisations and bodies. Those gateways will provide for relevant information to be sent from appropriate sources to assist in the identification and regulation of HMOs.

The greater and more comprehensive enforcement powers in the Bill will ensure that deviations from the licensing system are penalised in a timely and proportionate manner

and give councils the power to take immediate actions against those who flout the law. The use of fixed penalty notices will avoid the need to proceed directly to court action for lesser offences, allowing councils to enforce speedily, appropriately and cost-effectively, with benefits for councils and occupiers.

I believe that my approach to the availability of information from the HMO register, which allows an extract to be provided following a genuine request for information, ensures that an appropriate balance is struck between the public interest and the safety and security of landlords and their families.

Members will be aware of the impending relocation of the University of Ulster campus at Jordanstown to Belfast, which is expected to lead to greater demand for HMO accommodation. It is therefore more important than ever to create safeguards so that HMOs are properly regulated. The new regulatory approach will ensure that landlords and managing agents renting out properties have a legal responsibility to the tenants to keep flats and houses safe and well maintained.

Guidance for landlords will include model tenancy agreements that specify and outline acceptable tenant behaviour and detail tenant activities or practices that a landlord would not consider tolerable. Landlords will be encouraged to ensure that tenants are aware of their responsibilities and any possible consequences should they breach the conditions. My Department will publish a code of practice and comprehensive guidance for the licensing scheme to help councils and landlords to meet the requirements of the regulations.

Numerous stakeholders were closely involved in the development of the Bill. I thank them all for their contributions. I believe that there is a need for this new Bill and the proposals that it provides, and I am confident that they will be well received by the relevant stakeholders. On that basis, I hope that all parties can give the Bill their full support. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Social Development, I welcome the Final Stage of the Bill. I thank the Minister for bringing the Bill to this point. It was evident throughout the previous stages of the Bill that it has been welcomed by the entire House. That reflects the recognition that its provisions are seen as a good step forward to improve standards in HMOs and, ultimately, to protect and improve the health and safety of tenants in that type of accommodation. It is refreshing, as Chair of the Committee, to note the responsive approach taken by the Minister and his Department to suggestions made by the Committee and stakeholders to enhance the Bill. That shows what can be achieved in a relatively short period, even when a Bill is as long and complex as this one.

5.00 pm

Of course, we cannot expect changes overnight, and, as noted in the Committee's report, there are still matters to be worked out with stakeholders, particularly with councils, on how the Bill will be implemented. To that end, I am sure that the Committee for Communities will have a keen interest in any secondary legislation pertinent to the Bill, as well as the accompanying guidance produced by the new Department.

A Bill can make no difference unless it is properly enforced, and I welcome the Minister's commitment at Consideration Stage to ensure that councils are sufficiently resourced to ensure that that happens. As the Minister is aware, the Committee for Social Development took a keen interest in housing issues throughout the mandate. Proposals emanating from the review and role of the private rented sector and, particularly, the social housing reform programme, have the potential to reshape housing. Similarly, the report from the housing supply forum made recommendations that will have to be considered in detail but which should inform how we meet housing need across all tenures and, in so doing, contribute to economic growth. In short, housing will be a key issue for the new Department and the new Committee in the next mandate.

In closing as Chairperson, I thank my Committee colleagues for their contribution to the scrutiny of the Bill and to departmental and Committee officials who worked collaboratively to ensure that we reached this stage. I thank those stakeholders, particularly residents' organisations and housing rights experts, who gave evidence to the Committee and helped to shape our thinking. I say to the House, without hesitation, that the Committee for Social Development supports the Bill at Final Stage. I will now make a few remarks as an MLA.

On behalf of Sinn Féin, I thank the Minister and his Department for bringing this legislation forward. As has been said, it is a lengthy and complex Bill, and there has been a great deal of deliberation on it. The Committee, my party colleagues Fra McCann, Phil Flanagan and myself were struck by the strength and passion of evidence given, particularly from residents of areas such as the Holylands, which have suffered a lot over the last few years from the non-regulation of the sector. The over-provision of HMOs in residential areas completely skewed the character of those areas and led to difficulties for residents that remain today. We welcome the Bill, as it considerably enhances the health and safety, well-being and overall management of HMOs; it will certainly bring much more accountability to landlords. Although many landlords have been very responsible, some have been much less so, and the Bill enables us to hold them to account. Hopefully, that will be done in a spirit of cooperation; we want to ensure that the sector is well regulated so that it provides much needed accommodation in a healthy environment.

On that note, on behalf of Sinn Féin, I thank the Minister and his Department. I want to make one final point to residents, many of whom may have thought that the Bill would be a vehicle for restricting the provision of HMOs in any given area. However, that is outside the scope of this legislation, and we look forward to planning how we would restrict the provision of HMOs in a residential area. While HMO accommodation will continue to play an important role, it cannot ruin residential areas, which can be completely undermined by the provision of too much of this type of accommodation.

Ms P Bradley: I welcome the opportunity to take part in the Final Stage of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill. I do not intend to repeat what the Chair has so eloquently said about the Committee and our findings, and I intend to keep my comments brief, so I will just say that I agree with him on many points. I thank the Minister and the Department. The Committee raised various concerns during our deliberations on the Bill, and the Department

and the Minister listened to those concerns and brought back amendments.

I agree with the Chair that it may not be perfection, but I believe that it will go some way in supporting people who live in HMOs.

I said before in the Chamber that HMOs are an important part of many of our communities. At one stage, they were very much city-focused, but, across the entirety of our country, we see more and more that HMOs are being used in many of our towns, cities and, indeed, villages. We have an ever-changing demographic in Northern Ireland. It is a good thing that we have those changing demographics, but there are people, many of whom are vulnerable, who require to live in houses of multiple occupation. It is hoped that the Bill will go some way to protecting not only the tenants and landlords but the communities. I remember from our Committee witness sessions the communities in which a lot of the HMOs are based. I know that, in Belfast, they seem to be based within certain areas. It has caused problems within communities, so, I hope that the Bill will go some way to supporting that.

Again, I thank the Minister and the Committee, and I thank the Chair for his support during the Bill's progress and for chairing the meetings in a very fair and amicable way.

Mr Beggs: I too indicate my continuing support for this Bill on governing houses in multiple occupation. It is clear that there is a higher risk associated with them. I declare an interest in that my son, who is a student, is in a house that, I believe, will be coming under this legislation at some point in the future.

We think of houses in multiple occupation as largely being student accommodation, but it can be wider than that. It is important that there is this regulation to safeguard those who are living in such houses and to ensure that basic requirements are met in fire safety, access and electrical safety, because, when there are many resident tenants in a building, there is a danger that no one will take the lead role in looking after issues of danger. So, it is important that landlords have a role in that and that the design of the property is appropriate from the outset. So, I think that the legislation is needed, with licensing and the fit and proper person requirement for those who are providing housing for tenants. I agree with that concept.

The regulation should also help to improve things and drive up standards. One of the benefits that I have gained through the evidence to the Committee is the clarity that was given by some of the estate agents on the clear difference between a letting agent and a managing agent. Tenants whom I have worked with in my constituency — those who have been seeking help with their landlord — and I had not picked up the distinction between the two. We all thought that some were responsible for the management of a property when, in fact, they had merely let it out for the first month and had not been given any subsequent role by the landlord. The legislation clarifies that the responsibility falls, still, with the landlord or, alternatively, with a managing agent, if someone is named as such. So, it becomes clearer who is responsible for bringing about improvements.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. Does the Member agree that had my apartments Bill of 2011 gone through the Assembly, we would have been further on in

relation to what we are talking about and what the Minister has brought to the Assembly this evening?

Mr Beggs: You may well be right. I have come across difficulties with regard to apartment buildings and the management of them. It may have assisted. I am pleased that this legislation is at its Final Stage. It should help tenants in the future.

I think that the legislation has ended up with a degree of balance. It is important that details of who the landlord or the managing agent is are available to tenants, but concerns were expressed in the evidence that was given to us about how that information could be used and abused. Clearly, appropriate information would be given to tenants so that they would know who their landlord or managing agent was. I think that, with the information given to the Committee, we have reached a reasonable balance between trying to protect the rights of the tenant as well as the rights of the landlord who looks after such buildings.

I think it is important to look at some of the powers that are coming in with this. Fixed penalty notices were mentioned. Again, that is a mechanism that I think is badly needed to try to bring about improvements because, with very little cost to bureaucracy or without any court time, it is possible for remedies to occur, failures to be highlighted and hopefully, at that point, for them to be quickly remedied without recourse to any other more expensive processes. When you look at some of the guidance in it, you see that there is the potential for hearings. There is also provision to apply notices that specify works so that, when essential improvements are needed, there is a power to specify that, and, hopefully, again it will be improved quickly.

All in all, I think the legislation is timely. It is needed, and it is badly needed. There has been constructive engagement between the Committee, stakeholders who presented evidence to us and the Department to produce legislation that will bring about betterment in our community. I continue to support the Bill.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I will start by wishing you well, especially as this is your last event in the Assembly. I believe I have got to know you well over a number of years. At different times, you have given me some good advice on how to behave within the Chamber. I wish you well for the future.

This has been like a love-in all day. I thank the Minister for bringing this legislation to the House. It is an important piece of legislation. I believe that, in my time here dealing with legislation of this type, this has probably been one of the better pieces that has gone through the Committee, especially because of the way that the Department so readily worked with the Committee to take on board many of its concerns and those of the people who came in front of the Committee to make theirs known.

One of the things I would like to say is that there have been, in the past, a number of attempts to try to bring in legislation that would bring some controls over the sector. They have not added up to much. I believe we may have a piece of legislation here that will go along that way. Like Alex, I was concerned that we did not get into the nitty-gritty of looking at where the number of houses of multiple occupation could be controlled in streets and areas. We have seen in our own communities where not only HMOs but the private rented sector has tipped the balance in removing the residential nature of communities.

I hope that the legislation goes a long way to help that and that whoever comes back in the next mandate can review it and add to what can be a strengthened Bill to help people in the future. Again, I wish people well.

Lord Morrow: I thank all the Members for their contributions. What has been clear, not just today but throughout the passage of the Bill, are the supportive, positive remarks for the introduction of this important piece of housing legislation. I just want to say that it appears and has come across very clearly that the House is in general support. Some Members are more enthusiastic than others; nevertheless it has all been supportive. I regret that Kieran McCarthy found that he was not just as enthusiastic, but he comes at it from another angle.

I want to say a wee bit more about his departure in a moment or two because I do not think that it would be right to let him go without saying something to him.

5.15 pm

In relation to this matter, I am pleased to introduce the new mandatory licensing scheme, which builds on good practice from other parts of the United Kingdom. Key stakeholders have been calling for the introduction of a statutory licensing scheme, and the Assembly is now delivering in that respect. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the Bill will enable better, more robust regulation of HMOs, with the necessary powers for councils to help improve the standard of all HMOs, improve living conditions and respond to concerns raised by residents living near them.

To conclude, I express my appreciation to the Committee for Social Development and to Members for their positive contribution to the progress of this Bill and for the high level of consensus that the Bill has enjoyed. I commend the Bill to the House.

Before I sit down, as this will be my last opportunity to speak in this mandate, I wish all those who are leaving the Assembly voluntarily, or those who might leave through enforcement or whatever their exit strategy is, well. I thank them for their assistance and cooperation during my short term as Minister for Social Development. I wish Mr McCarthy well in particular because I think that he goes out slightly aggrieved in relation to the HMO Bill, in that he came forward with proposals at an earlier date, and he felt that those should have been adopted. I say to him that maybe something better is in place, but those who are coming back will not forget you, Kieran, in this Assembly.

To you, Deputy Speaker, this place will not seem the same without you, but since nothing stays the same forever and change must come and you go along with that change, I genuinely wish you a long, full, happy, contented retirement. I understand that you take a great interest in driving your Morris Minor. May that Morris Minor go long distances, and may the fuel keep low in cost to keep you travelling round. Enjoy your retirement.

I have to close on a sad note. It would be absolutely remiss of me if I did not come to the situation that we have just learned about today of the passing of Adrian Ismay, the prison officer who was, I call it, murdered. It is a sad reflection on society, and it is most unfortunate that, on the day that this Assembly shuts for its last call, we have to stand here and say it, but I want to extend my sincere and heartfelt sympathy to that family as they grieve tonight

over the passing of someone who was so near and dear to them. My heart goes out to them today. I regret very much what has happened. It should not have happened, but I trust that those who carried it out will soon be brought before the courts of justice to answer for their dreadful deeds.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Thank you for your kind words. I am sorry, Lord Morrow, that you have to end on that note, but I am sure that the whole House concurs with you and sends its love and affection to that family so horribly hurt in that dreadful murder.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill [NIA 60/11-16] do now pass.

Mental Capacity Bill: Final Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the Mental Capacity Bill [NIA 49/11-16] do now pass.

I have great pleasure today in moving the Final Stage of the Bill. Born out of the Bamford review, it is fair to say that the Bill had a rather long journey to the Chamber. Turning the vision that Professor Bamford and his colleagues had into detailed policy proposals and then a workable legal framework, with no template to work from, was never going to be easy or quick. Careful analysis of often complex concepts was crucial to a successful outcome, and balanced judgements had to be made, all under the watchful eye of those involved in the Bamford review and the many stakeholders whose contribution has shaped the Bill from day one. I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that, without their efforts and dedication, the Assembly would not have had the Bill to debate and scrutinise in this mandate. They can all take significant credit for the integrity of the Bill as introduced, which has now made it through to Final Stage with its core principles and underpinning reforms intact. It is only right, therefore, that I begin by placing on record my sincere thanks to them all. I imagine that I will not be alone in doing so today.

It is also important that I recognise the significant investment made by the Office of the Legislative Counsel in the preparation of the legislation. The complexity of the task was recognised by it from the beginning. The issues demanded innovative and flexible ways of working over an extended period. Without doubt, the robust and coherent legal framework underpinning the Bill is, in no small measure, attributable to the various counsel who worked on it. Their support and advice throughout has been greatly appreciated by my Department and the Department of Justice.

So, too, has the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, which has played such a pivotal role in getting the Bill to Final Stage. Under the stewardship of the Chairman, my friend and colleague Alastair Ross, its timely and focused scrutiny of such a large Bill within a compressed time frame means that we are now on the cusp of passing what is perhaps the most important social legislation to come before the Assembly in this mandate. Therefore, I want to take the opportunity to personally thank them, particularly the Chair and the Committee staff, for their efficient and diligent approach to the scrutiny of the Bill, as evidenced by the comprehensive report published at the end of the Committee Stage. That report highlighted a small number of issues that resulted in some policy amendments to the Bill at Consideration Stage. While I, on behalf of the Executive, may have counselled against some of them, it is more important today to highlight the key message from the report, which is the Committee and, indeed, stakeholders' support for the broad objectives of the Bill.

With the indulgence of Members and yourself, Deputy Speaker, I will briefly return to those objectives. After having spent, in this case, a long time during previous stages dealing with the minutiae of the Bill, it is important to remind ourselves of what we are trying to achieve. First and foremost, the Bill is about reducing the stigma that is still felt by many people suffering from mental disorder. It will introduce a new rights-based legal framework that applies equally to every adult where there is a need to

intervene in their lives on health grounds. In other words, there will be no more separate rules for those with mental disorder. Instead, there will be rules that recognise everyone's fundamental right to make decisions for themselves if they have the capacity to do so.

It is, of course, that fused approach that makes the Bill novel. Indeed, it is one of a kind, not only in the United Kingdom but further afield. Global firsts are not everyday occurrences, particularly for small jurisdictions like ours. We can and should be immensely proud that Northern Ireland is considered to be leading the way in such an important area of law, which we should also remember has the potential to touch upon everyone's lives. On top of that, the Bill will ensure that, when an intervention is made in someone's life, those responsible for making that decision do more to ensure that it is in the person's best interests. The additional safeguards provided for in the Bill go well beyond those in other jurisdictions. The greater emphasis on supporting people to make decisions for themselves also adds to the widely recognised progressive nature of the Bill.

Those are the headline reforms that constitute the core of the Bill developed by my Department, but I also want to remind Members that the Department of Justice has made a significant contribution to its provisions as well. Before I highlight some of the key justice measures, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge, in particular, the support shown for the Bill by Minister Ford, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for that. My colleague has responsibility for a number of civil and criminal justice matters dealt with by the Bill. In relation to civil justice matters, the Bill contains provision for High Court powers to make decisions on behalf of a person who lacks capacity to make that decision for himself or herself. It also contains clauses that provide for the appointment of a public guardian who will carry out important protective functions for those who are incapacitated. Those are important safeguards for vulnerable individuals.

The Bill also contains clauses that deal with a range of criminal justice interventions. The Bill provides powers for the Police Service of Northern Ireland to remove a vulnerable person to a place of safety so that appropriate medical attention can be obtained; powers for criminal courts to ensure that individuals receive healthcare disposals where that is the appropriate outcome; and powers to move prisoners from custody to hospital if inpatient care is required.

Those powers were devised to take account of two important considerations. First, respect for a person's ability to make decisions about whether he or she wishes to receive healthcare treatment, an approach that supports and complements the ethos of the Bamford review. Secondly, those powers ensure that the criminal justice system continues to have robust mechanisms to safeguard public protection.

I do not need to remind Members that reaching the Final Stage of this Bill or any Bill is rarely the end of the matter. That is particularly true in this case. While it is quite right that we concentrate today on applauding the significant milestone reached, I want to be entirely up front with Members and say that, in many ways, the real work is only beginning.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

There are numerous sets of regulations to be made and codes of practice to develop, which will require significant stakeholder and professional involvement, along with training and the delivery of awareness-raising programmes. Those are as vital as the legislation, if the experience of England and Wales is anything to go by, where, coincidentally, this is national mental capacity action day.

That is why planning for implementation is already under way. We do not want to fall into the trap of good Act but poor implementation, which was a key finding of the House of Lords post-legislative scrutiny report on the English Mental Capacity Act. I urge Members, therefore, to continue to support forthcoming efforts to turn the reforms in the Bill into reality for the many people in our society who more than deserve the new protections that it offers.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on the Mental Capacity Bill): Mr Deputy Speaker, can I also add to those who are wishing you a happy retirement, lest I forget at the end of my speech? I trust that you will enjoy the freedom that that brings.

It is important to note that both Ministers responsible are now in the Chamber: The Health Minister was here, and the Justice Minister has now entered. That shows the unique nature of the Bill in that it was brought forward by the two Departments. That could have brought additional complexity to an already complex task, but the Departments and officials worked pretty well together. That was certainly the experience of the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I welcome the Final Stage of the Bill. As Members will be aware, it has been in development for more than 10 years and emerged as one of the recommendations of the Bamford review, which concluded that there should be a single legislative framework to reform existing mental health legislation and to introduce capacity legislation to Northern Ireland for the first time.

This was a complex task, sometimes for simple minds. As the Minister said, Northern Ireland is the only place in the world to have undertaken this approach. The number of amendments made at Consideration Stage is evidence enough of the challenges associated with drafting such a wide-ranging and technically detailed Bill that cuts across the responsibilities of the two Departments.

The Bill has been significantly improved because of the amendments that the Ad Hoc Committee proposed and those that it persuaded the Department to bring forward. I thank the Minister for his cooperative approach and for taking on board the majority of the Committee's recommendations.

A number of amendments deserve mention because of their importance. The first issue relates to enduring power of attorney (EPA). As a result of the Committee's scrutiny, clause 110 was removed at Consideration Stage. That clause would have prevented further EPAs from being made once the legislation came into operation. As introduced, the Bill proposed that EPAs be replaced by a system of lasting power of attorney.

The Committee was concerned that that approach would significantly limit the options available to people who wished to plan for how decisions relating to their health,

welfare and finances should be made when the time came when they were no longer able to make those decisions for themselves. We heard from stakeholders, including the Law Society, that there were serious drawbacks to a system that permitted only the making of lasting power of attorney and excluded the making of EPAs.

Experience from England and Wales has shown that making a lasting power of attorney is a lot more expensive than making an EPA, at around £700 compared with £100. That means, in effect, that a lasting power of attorney is simply not an affordable option for far too many people. The Committee took the view that the more sensible approach would be to allow the current EPA system to run alongside the new lasting power of attorney system created by the Bill. We believed that that would provide people with more flexibility and accessibility in planning for their future needs. The Bill will now permit EPAs to be made. The Committee's view is that that has significantly strengthened the legislation and will help people to make preparations for how important decisions should be made when, unfortunately, they no longer have the capacity to make them.

5.30 pm

I turn now to Committee amendments, and the Assembly supported proposals to strengthen the additional safeguards relating to treatment with serious consequences, which are dealt with in Part 2. The Bill as introduced allowed for the nominated person to object to any proposed treatment with serious consequences. In the event of such an objection, the treatment could proceed only if the prevention of serious harm condition was met. This condition is that the failure to provide treatment could create a risk of serious harm to the individual in question or a risk of serious physical harm to other persons. However, if the individual who lacks capacity resisted the treatment with serious consequences, that would not trigger the prevention of serious harm condition. The Committee was of the view that this represented a discrepancy in the Bill. It therefore tabled amendments to require the prevention of harm condition to be met where a person resists treatment so that the same standard is required as when a nominated person objects to treatment. At Consideration Stage, the House supported these amendments, which provide an additional level of protection for the person who lacks capacity.

Another aspect of the Bill improved through Committee amendments relates to police powers to remove a person to a place of safety, which comes under Part 9. As introduced, the Bill permits the police to remove a person of any age to a hospital or police station in situations where the person is in need of immediate care or control and where failure to remove them would create a risk of serious harm to them or others. The Committee supported these powers but agreed with the view expressed by many stakeholders that the use of a police station as a place of safety for young people should be the exception rather than the norm. The Committee therefore tabled an amendment to allow the close monitoring of that situation. The amendment requires the PSNI to record specific statistics on the use of place-of-safety powers in relation to young people and on their ultimate disposal. We were concerned that, if separate statistics were not collected on young people, there would be a risk that such statistics could not be routinely or easily sourced. The amendment was supported by the House and will allow the proper

monitoring of how police powers of safety are used in relation to young people.

I will now turn to amendments made by the Department at the request of the Committee. The Committee was concerned about how the Department was approaching the matter of advance decisions. Clause 11 recognises effective advance decisions, but it does not codify them. In other words, the Bill does not set out the rules on what constitutes effective advance decisions or how people can go about making them. Instead, the Department left those issues to common law.

The Committee's view was that this reliance on common law had the potential to create confusion for people who wish to make an advance decision and for healthcare professionals. The Department's rationale for relying on common law was that there needed to be wider public debate and that key policy issues remained to be determined, such as whether the rules should be the same for all types of treatment. However, in response to the Committee's concern that an issue of such significance would be left to the courts to determine, the Department proposed an amendment to provide for a review-and-report clause.

The Bill now contains a requirement for the Department to review the law on advance decisions and produce a report to be laid before the Assembly within three years of the Act coming into operation. This amendment will provide reassurance to stakeholders who were concerned about how advance decisions were treated in the Bill, as it means that advance decisions remain a live policy issue in the Department and will be re-examined down the line.

Another set of amendments that deserves mention is that made to Part 10 as a result of the Committee's scrutiny of public protection orders. One of the criminal justice provisions in the Bill is that public protection orders are being introduced for people judged not culpable enough at the time of committing an offence to be deserving of a prison sentence; for people who are unfit to plead; and for people who are guilty by reason of insanity. The idea behind public protection orders is that, if these people pose a danger to the public, they cannot be released, even though they are not culpable for their actions. However, public protection orders can be used only if the detention conditions are met. In the Bill as introduced, the detention conditions required a risk of serious physical harm to other persons if the offender was not detained.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists advised the Committee that the criteria for making a public protection order might not be met in the case of a person found to have committed a rape that did not result in serious physical harm to the victim, the implication being that the person might be given an absolute discharge. The Committee supported the view of the Royal College of Psychiatrists that the key issue was whether the harm was serious, irrespective of whether it was serious physical or serious psychological harm.

As a result of the Committee's focus on the issue, the Department made a range of amendments to the Bill so that reference to "psychological harm" is inserted where appropriate, provided that it is of a serious nature. In effect, this means that the detention conditions for a public protection order include the potential of the individual to

create a risk of serious physical or psychological harm to other persons.

That has significantly strengthened the Bill and strikes a better balance between the rights of the person who lacks capacity and the rights of the public to be protected from those who pose a serious risk.

Another key amendment that came about through Committee discussion was on the use of restraining orders in cases where the individual is found unfit to plead. The law at present does not allow for a restraining order to be made in those circumstances, which the Committee believed was a loophole. The Department responded to that concern by bringing forward an amendment to allow the courts to sentence an individual to a restraining order where that individual has been found unfit to plead. Again, the Committee believes that that amendment improves the balance between the autonomy of the individual and the protection of the public.

The final aspect of the Bill that I want to draw attention to is the cost associated with implementation. The introduction of the Bill will require a substantial change to practice and culture across the health and social care and justice sectors. Major change that will necessitate staff training, additional staffing, an increased legal aid budget and the establishment and operation of a review tribunal and an Office of the Public Guardian comes with a significant financial cost. Departments have estimated that between £76 million and £84 million is required for year 1 implementation costs and then between £68 million and £76 million for annual recurrent costs.

Mr McCarthy: Thank you for giving way. Whilst the Member makes an important point, he will recall that, when the late Professor Bamford's review was launched in the Stormont Hotel by the late Paul Goggins, the figure mentioned was £600 million. We must remember that we knew that there would be a cost to embarking on this important legislation, and we will just have to find the money from somewhere.

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for his intervention in as far as I appreciate that cost has always been an issue. The argument of having "to find the money from somewhere" is not one that any Minister will find convincing. I look to the person beside him, who has come under increasing pressure over closing courts for a minor sum of money. The cry of "Well, he has to find the money from somewhere" is not one that washes with that Minister, and I doubt that it washes with other Ministers.

In fairness, we have to be realistic, and we have to be honest with the stakeholders who engaged with the Committee about the substantial price tag of the legislation. In fairness to the Committee and, indeed, the Departments, we have been open and honest about the significant cost and the difficulty that it will present. That is a decision that the next Executive will have to take collectively. It is a decision on whether or not this will be part of the Programme for Government to make sure that the Executive find the money for implementation. I suspect, speaking from a personal position, that there will be other priorities that may take precedence over the implementation of this Bill, but we will wait and see what happens in May.

Given the current financial climate, as I just said, and the likely climate over the next four to five years, the

question that arises is whether we will be able to afford to implement this. When those issues were raised previously, the response from the Department was that it would not be proper to start to put resources against a Bill that had not yet passed into law. That may be the case using a strict interpretation of Departments' financial planning processes, but it would be unwise for the Assembly simply to ignore the issue until the Bill becomes an Act. We need at least to begin to think about how the legislation might be funded. As I just said, that, of course, will be a matter for the new mandate and a future Executive, and difficult choices, as always, will have to be made.

I want to conclude on a positive note. On behalf of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee, I am pleased to see the Bill reach its Final Stage after all the work that has been put into it on all sides. Mental health and mental capacity are not the easiest issues on which to legislate in a mature and constructive way, and I congratulate the Assembly on getting the Bill onto the statute book.

Along with Mr McCarthy, I recently spoke at a mental health summit, and I know that the Health Minister had spoken at it earlier in the day. Many of the delegates at that conference have helped us with the Bill and have put significant work and effort into shaping it, and we owe a debt of gratitude to them for their help and support over the last number of months. I also put on record my sincere gratitude to the Committee Clerk for all the work that she has done over the last number of months. Many members came onto the Committee somewhat reluctantly from the Health Committee and the Justice Committee, and, at times, there was difficulty in getting full engagement from members on some of the issues. More often than not, it required the Clerk to explain to us some of the implications of different parts of this hugely lengthy Bill. A lot of work was put in by her and her staff, and I wanted to put that on record.

I also thank my Deputy Chair, Patsy McGlone, who is not here at the moment, for his support over the last number of months and the members who made a contribution as well. The fact that we had members from both the Justice Committee and the Health Committee meant that we were looking at the Bill from different angles, and that could have helped in how we assessed the Bill. I make particular mention of Mr McCarthy, who, I know, is not seeking re-election. Mr McCarthy was a little bit boisterous earlier in the day, which is unlike him, but I am sure that he will be forgiven because it is his last day. I wish him a happy retirement, and I am sure that he will enjoy the freedom that that brings.

I leave it there. This is a significant Bill that has been passed. I hope that it will be implemented at some stage in the future, and I thank both Ministers and the officials for working so constructively with the Committee over the past number of months to shape the Bill into the form that it is in at Final Stage.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Níl ach cúpla focal le rá agam faoi Chéim Dheiridh an Bhille. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have a few comments to make on the Bill reaching its Final Stage.

I welcome the fact that we have reached this stage, and I want to thank the people who helped us to this stage. That includes the Chair, who skilfully steered us through at times. He mentioned that there were difficult times, when it was hard to get a quorum. I also thank the Committee

Clerk, who did an excellent job in providing us with all the information and explanation that we needed. She very patiently worked with us on that. I also thank the people who gave evidence. The evidence was comprehensive, and I make special mention of those who came back on several occasions to brief the Committee numerous times.

A huge amount of work has gone into the Bill. It is a very large piece of legislation, and, as we know, it is the first of its kind, in bringing together legislation on mental health and mental capacity. It is an achievement that we have reached this stage, and, with all the work that went on along the way and the amendments that were made, we have improved the Bill.

I would like to mention the British Psychological Society (BPS), which raised issues about the assessment of people's mental capacity. They had concerns and wanted to see psychologists specifically included in the definition of people who could make assessments. I felt that they made a strong case for that. We have ended up with the Minister agreeing to deal with that aspect in regulations and the code of practice. While the BPS is disappointed that it did not get that in the Bill, nevertheless it will be working on the development of the code of practice and the regulations. The hope is that they will reach a conclusion and definitions that they will all be satisfied with.

Sin a bhfuil le rá agam. That is all I have to say. The Deputy Speaker has gone now, but I had planned to say, "Thank you" to him, to Kieran and to all the other people who will not be staying but will be leaving the Assembly.

Mrs Dobson: Over recent weeks, amongst the rush of legislation being steamrolled through the Assembly, it could have been possible to overlook just how important and groundbreaking this Bill is. It will introduce a single statutory framework governing all situations where a decision needs to be made in relation to care, treatment or personal welfare. The Bill represents the biggest reform of law about decision-making in many years, and, certainly, it is the first time that the Assembly has so fundamentally reformed such a complex area of law.

When we, as legislators, set new mechanisms to assist people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, we obviously need to show great caution. Throughout my time on the Ad Hoc Committee, I was very conscious of that. That is why I am so grateful to all the mental health organisations that so generously fed into the scrutiny of the Bill. I know that all members of the Committee are grateful for that important feedback and contribution.

5.45 pm

The outcome of that engagement was very clear to see through the significant number of amendments that were made to the Bill over recent weeks. For once, Northern Ireland is taking the lead not only locally but, in the case of this Bill, internationally. So many years after it was first proposed under Bamford, we can be rightly proud of it.

Mr McCarthy: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I commend everyone involved in getting the Mental Capacity Bill to its Final Stage. As has been said, this is an immense achievement for the Northern Ireland Assembly and, indeed, the two Departments involved — Health and Justice. Indeed, I would say that this is an historic joint Bill. I welcome the very strong and important collaboration

between the Department of Health and the Department of Justice in bringing forward the legislation.

The Bill is a key component of the implementation of the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability. The legislation will provide a single statutory framework for decision-making and care for physical and mental health conditions. The integrated approach is particularly welcome and significant. The Bamford review recommended that a single Bill should cover mental health and mental capacity issues. The Bill has brought into one piece of legislation the usual provisions of mental health law and mental capacity law. This is the first time that that fusion approach has been considered anywhere in the world.

People in Northern Ireland, whether they have mental health difficulties and/or physical health problems, will now have equal rights in making decisions about their treatments. We now have a single piece of legislation for people who have a physical health problem and who lose capacity; people with a mental health problem who lose capacity; and people with physical and mental health problems who lose capacity. It will also cover people who are vulnerable, as well as those, including people in the criminal justice system, who lack capacity.

The new legislation will require that, if a person has capacity, they can then make their own decision about their treatment and that all possible support in making that decision will be provided. Northern Ireland will be the first region in the world to achieve such legislation, and we should be greatly proud of that achievement. It is hoped that other countries around the world will follow our lead.

If a person lacks capacity and has not put in place alternative decision-making arrangements, important safeguards should be in place for that person before the state can intervene. Decisions can then be made regarding a person's health, welfare and financial issues. A single vote will provide safeguards for all people who lack capacity at any point in their lives whether from a physical or mental health condition. That means there would no longer be any discrimination in legislation for those who lose capacity for reasons to do with a mental health difficulty. In saying that, we must be conscious that discrimination and stigma against those with mental health conditions are still problems. There is an ongoing challenge across government and wider society to address that anomaly.

This very important work involved very many people, as has been said. The work commenced at the start of this century with the vision of Professor David Bamford and his colleagues. In October 2002, the Department of Health initiated a major wide-ranging and independent review of the law, policy and provision affecting those people in Northern Ireland with mental health needs or a learning disability. Nowadays that review is referred to as the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability.

I pay tribute to the vision of Professor Bamford, who sadly passed away before his work was completed. His role as chair was taken over by his colleague Professor Roy McClelland. Professor McClelland subsequently chaired the board of experts appointed by the Health Minister to champion the Department's response to the Bamford proposals, and he is a member of the project board overseeing the development of the new mental capacity legislation. We thank Professor McClelland for his

dedication and hard work in carrying on where Professor Bamford unfortunately left off.

I pay tribute to everyone — as has already been said in the Chamber, there were many — who worked hard and together to see this improvement for everyone with a mental health condition or a learning disability. Arguably, no other piece of legislation has ever come to the Assembly with as much preparation and engagement with the experts, service users and, indeed, other key stakeholders. At one stage, it seemed that we in Northern Ireland would also revert to having two separate Bills, but I am delighted that we are adopting the much more innovative and potentially transformative approach instead.

The implementation of the Bill is now critical. Specialist training and raising public awareness will be essential. There is a much wider issue of ensuring that the Bill itself will be properly resourced. That is perhaps an issue for another day, and, at this stage, our priority must be to get the legislation onto the statute book. Nevertheless, that funding requirement remains for the Executive. They also have to consider how to address the wider mental health challenge for government and society. As we know, mental health conditions affect a considerable number of people in our society, with around one in four people facing such issues at some stage in their lives and around one in five being affected at any one time. Not least given the legacy of the Troubles, mental health conditions are more prevalent in Northern Ireland than in any of our neighbouring jurisdictions.

While there has been some rebalancing of mental health expenditure from acute inpatient services towards the delivery of services in the community, mental health services are still underfunded in comparison to services for physical illness and considerably underfunded by comparison to UK mental health services, and particular challenges lie in areas such as child and adolescent services and those for older people. We must not permit this aspect of our health service to remain the Cinderella service in relation to the funding of our health service.

Mental well-being has an impact across the social, health and economic spheres, including education, employment, social inclusion, physical health, recovery from mental and physical illness, self-harm and suicide risk, participation in public life and the criminal justice system. In welcoming the Final Stage of the Bill, we should close by recognising the wider challenges and the shared responsibilities across government and wider society to address those issues.

I leave the Assembly with a note of caution. Whoever is listening and whoever the new Health Minister may be, I regard health as the number one priority. If, in the future, I am not happy with health provision, whilst I will not be here, I know all the chief executives of the trusts, I know all the important people in the Department and I have all their contact numbers. Believe you me, I will be prepared to contact them if Health has not delivered when required. I imagine that Members would expect me or anyone else to do the same.

Finally, I thank our Health Committee, its staff and our Ad Hoc Committee staff and members for working diligently and very hard to get this historic legislation passed before the end of the mandate. I thank Maeve McLaughlin, the Chair of our Committee. She has not said anything yet, but

probably will before we leave. I thank her for her guidance and direction in being the Chair of the Health Committee.

I also thank Alastair Ross for his work in steering the Ad Hoc Committee, which I must say was very heavy work for some of us, but we got through it. I thank Alastair for being there to direct and guide us. Of course, he has already paid tribute to the Clerks who serviced our Committee. I also want to thank Alastair for his kind comments on my retirement. We will maybe meet somewhere along the line. If you are ever in Kircubbin, drop in and we will have a chat and see how things are going.

I also want to thank the Health Minister. Is he there? He is. He has the head down. I hope that he is listening to everything that I am saying. I want to thank him for his work in getting us to where we are today. There was a period when we thought that we were not going to make it.

I remember one occasion when — it was not the present Health Minister — another Health Minister almost blamed the Justice Minister for dragging his feet.

Mr Wells: Name him.

Mr McCarthy: It was not you. I did not let him away with it; he did not drag his feet, and nor did Simon Hamilton or Jim Wells. We are where we are today, and thank God for it.

It is unfortunate that the other Deputy Speaker has moved away. I will say a few words of thanks to him for his hard work over the years and for the length of time that I have known him. I wish him well in his retirement; I wish him good health. We are both going to a less stressful and more peaceful way of life. Like John, I am a Morris Minor enthusiast. John's car and mine are both in the garage at the moment. We will wait for the summertime, when they will both come out and no doubt will have pride of place as we go along. That gives us plenty to think about on our retirement.

In conclusion, I thank everyone for their contribution to getting this historic legislation passed this evening.

Mr Wells: Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know, it is a tradition for me to speak on the last day of the Assembly. I was the last person in the Public Gallery when the Assembly collapsed in 1976. I was the last person to speak when the Assembly collapsed in 1986. I was the last person in the Building before it burned down in 1995 — *[Interruption.]* — and I was the last person to speak when the Assembly collapsed in 1999. Normally, when I do this, I am a harbinger of doom and gloom. Indeed, I made this point in the Assembly when it looked like we were doomed yet again, and the honourable Member for Newry and Armagh Mr Kennedy said, "Would the honourable Member reassure us that he wasn't the last passenger on the Titanic?". Normally, when I speak on the last day, it is seen as gloom and doom, but the Assembly has a new engine. We have been talking about Morris Minors; the Assembly has had a service, a new engine and has been filled up with fuel. It has a much brighter future than it has had in any previous end-of-mandate session.

Given my long history in the Chamber, I remember that I was here in 1985, which was 31 years ago, when the previous mental health and incapacity legislation — the equivalent legislation — went through. That was 30 years ago. A complete generation later, here we are, back with new legislation. I assure you that, even though I am a non-smoker, a non-drinker and a vegetarian, I will not be back here in another 30 years' time when the next revised

legislation goes through. I assure everyone that this will certainly be my last opportunity to speak on this type of legislation.

Mr McCarthy is absolutely right. Kircubbin will regain a genius in the form of Mr McCarthy. He has certainly made his mark in the Assembly. However, his threat to hover around this Building and Castle Buildings like a ghost from the past worries me. When things go wrong, we can blame him; we will say, "He hasn't gone away, you know; he's watching us". I pay tribute to Mr McCarthy, who has been extremely diligent on this issue.

What irks me slightly about all this is that this is an excellent example of two Departments from very disparate political backgrounds, the voluntary sector and the legislature working together in unison to produce first-class legislation. Will we see a single headline in 'The Irish News', the 'Belfast Telegraph' or the 'News Letter' tomorrow morning saying, "Assembly triumph: new legislation on mental health"? Will we see it in the first 16 pages? No, we will not. We will see it, if at all, tucked away in some obscure corner of the media. That is very unfortunate. Even today, we had the naysayers on the TV and radio demeaning the work of the Assembly. At times, they are absolutely right, and we deserve all we get. However, there are occasions when the Assembly performs extremely well. When I was Health Minister, I was extremely worried about the complexity and length of and the difficulties with this legislation.

I hope that Mr McCarthy was not indicating that I was the Minister who suggested that Mr Ford could possibly have delayed the implementation of the legislation. I remember a crisis session in Mr Ford's bunker in Castle Buildings one day when we were summoned in. It was looking like it would be extremely difficult to get the legislation through. I remember bringing in officials from my Department at the time and saying, "We simply have to get this through by the end of the mandate".

6.00 pm

This is perhaps not only one of the most complex and difficult but one of the most important pieces of legislation that the Assembly will ever deal with, and I am glad to say that people got their act together. I congratulate those who worked on the Ad Hoc Committee. I must say that, when I saw it being established — at that time, I was Deputy Chair of the Health Committee — I was dreading it, because I knew that it was inevitable that, as I was on the Justice Committee and the Health Committee, I was going to be on the Ad Hoc Committee. I saw it as being extremely hard, difficult and complex work. There were not 50 killed in the rush to join that Committee. It was a novel approach. Very little Assembly legislation goes through Ad Hoc Committees. You are bringing together two very disparate Departments. We had to delay the legislation to enable the Department of Justice to catch up. That was not its fault — before Mr Ford gets annoyed. At a late stage, we decided, uniquely in Northern Ireland, to have a unified mental health and incapacity Bill that would deal with free citizens and those who were being detained at Her Majesty's pleasure, so there had to be an element of delay to achieve that.

The Committee started late and had to work very hard. Of course, there were poor souls who were on all three Committees. That is extremely hard work, but it paid

off. Normally when legislation is running into difficulty, individual members who are not members of the various Committees are lobbied intentionally by concerned voluntary groups, the royal colleges and so on, who say, "We are worried and concerned about this legislation. Put pressure on your members on those Committees to get things speeded up or issues resolved". However, my inbox was practically empty during the processing of the Bill because people had confidence in the work being done by the Ad Hoc Committee and the two Ministers. I would package that and keep it, Mr Ford, because it is the only time that you are ever going to hear it as this is our last day. The two Ministers, the two Departments and the two Committees all worked well together. The result is that we have first-class legislation that benefits not only from the fact that we had the Ad Hoc Committee and two Ministers who were committed to the legislation but from our learning from the mistakes of GB. We are about eight years behind the rest of the United Kingdom. They have similar legislation, but we were able to examine the mistakes and shortcomings of that legislation and make amendments to our legislation to ensure that that did not happen here. It is first-class work by all concerned.

I am absolutely delighted that, tonight, we know for certain that the legislation will receive Royal Assent. It shows the Assembly at its best. To some extent, the fact that there will be so little in the way of headlines and accolades for what has been done also shows a lack of interest in the work of the Assembly. Of course, self-praise is no praise. However, I think that we need to blow our trumpets a bit more often when things are done right in the Assembly. The legislation will improve treatment for some of the most vulnerable in our society, those who up to now have largely been failed as regards resources and legislation as a result of the mistakes made by politicians in 1985. There was a deficiency in the legislation.

I will just sound one word of caution. Mr McCarthy raised the issue. The legislation is excellent and fit for purpose, but it will require the allocation of resources. It would be a pity if we built up expectations in our community that we have cracked it and got first-class legislation but then simply cannot find the money to resource adequately the quantum change in treatment for those with mental illness in Northern Ireland. That very difficult issue will have to be dealt with. My understanding is that mental health in Northern Ireland is funded at a level that is about 30% less than the rest of the United Kingdom. We often said that we would address that situation when we got the Bamford report implemented. We were not aware that Northern Ireland's fiscal position could not be worse when it comes to providing extra resources to deal with this needy part of our community. That will be a difficulty, but at least we now go forward knowing that the basic template is right. I think, therefore, that we can justifiably say that we have taken steps forward in the treatment of those vulnerable members of the community. All those concerned, including Mr Ross, Mr McCarthy, the Ad Hoc Committee and the two Ministers, are to be congratulated.

Mr Hamilton: I will be brief in summing up the Final Stage debate on this important legislation. I thank Members from all sides who contributed this evening. Again, as I did in my opening remarks, I put on record my thanks to the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee and, by extension, the entire Committee. As Mr Wells pointed out, it was a daunting task for many on the Committee. The Chair acknowledged

how daunting and difficult the task was, and we saw some evidence of that at Consideration Stage, when we had to deal with roughly 500 amendments. In my time in the Assembly, I cannot recall — maybe others can — so many amendments being tabled to a Bill. I commend the Ad Hoc Committee, led by my friend and colleague Mr Ross, as Chair, for its work, the very thorough report that it produced and the impact that it had on the legislation.

Sometimes, the positive impact of our Assembly system is missed, as Mr Wells said, by many. Legislation goes off to Committees, and people think that it just disappears and nothing ever happens to it, but seldom does legislation that goes to a Committee not come out the better for it, and this Bill is a very good example of that. Whilst there were times that I, as Minister, Minister Ford or both of us disagreed with suggestions, in the spirit of compromise and trying to get good legislation on to the books, we agreed with the Committee and accepted some of the amendments that it proposed, and the Bill is better for it.

Mr Ford: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, it is an opportune moment.

Mr Ford: I appreciate the Minister giving way. The procedures in this place indicate that no two Ministers can speak on a single piece of legislation, so I pay tribute to Simon Hamilton for the way in which he carried the legislation on behalf of the two Departments. Of course, he was ably supported because the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee had been well trained in the field of justice and was therefore capable of dealing with complex legislation. It was, as others said, an extremely positive example of good work being done, and I am extremely grateful for the work that was done between the two Departments, our officials and the Committee's officials.

I will digress, if I may, slightly. When, as a very young and enthusiastic trainee social worker, I found my supervisor on my first student placement to be a principal social worker called David Bamford, I little believed that, 40-something years later, one of the things that I would do on my last day as Minister in the Chamber would be to sit through the Final Stage of a Bill that puts into practice the work that he suggested. David not only supervised me but came to Jordanstown as a senior lecturer the following year, and he was known by my class as somebody who was very rooted in the practical realities, alongside serious intellectual rigour. We see that in the report that he produced and in the legislation. I also pay tribute to Professor Roy McClelland, who, with his background in psychiatry, has played a significant role for the Department of Justice in promoting safer custody. I am delighted that the work of those two men and their colleagues has been carried through by the Ad Hoc Committee and the two Departments, despite the naysayers — not Mr Wells, but a certain predecessor of his — into very solid and very positive legislation that we can all take pride in.

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Minister of Justice for his intervention. I was just about to thank him for his contribution throughout the development of the legislation. We simply would not have what we have here without his input. As Mr Wells pointed out, it will be missed, I fear, by many that this is a global first. We do not do many things that are the first of their kind anywhere in the world. We simply would not be able to say that, had my Department, which I am very pleased to lead, and the Minister's

Department not worked so closely together. We stand here and take whatever credit there is for that, but he and I know that there are a great many officials behind us in our Departments and in the Department of Finance and Personnel with whom we had to work on certain aspects of the Bill. In some cases, they have devoted many years of their time to this legislation, and I wish to place on record my thanks to them — the officials in my Department, the Department of Justice and the Department of Finance — for everything that they put in to make this world-first a reality. Many deserve praise for their work over the last six years.

The Bill predates several Ministers — even Minister Ford. That might sound like a long time — it is a long time for a Bill — but it is understandable that a Bill of this size and complexity took that time to move from the conceptual stage to consultations and through the legislative process. Any less time and effort spent on it would undoubtedly have had an impact on the quality of the final product, which has been roundly praised this evening. Given the shelf life of the legislation, quality is not something that the House should be prepared to compromise on, and I do not think that we have.

The time and effort expended on it also ensure, I believe, that the Bill will serve as a model for new mental capacity legislation in other jurisdictions, which I know have been watching its development very closely. Would it not be wonderful if, after the election, whoever is in my post or Minister Ford's post could say that officials and Ministers were coming from other parts of the world to Northern Ireland to see what we had achieved with the Bill?

In truth, it should be on everyone's radar. The Bill could apply to any of us at any point in our life. At the very least, we are all likely to know or even to care for someone to whom it will apply.

I am glad that Mr McCarthy made a contribution on his final day in the Assembly. It is fair to say — it is probably not often said about political opponents — that I will miss Mr McCarthy. I will not miss his interrogations of me, but I will miss him on a human level. I will miss him beating me in first preference votes in successive elections, as he tends to do. If I may, Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank him for what he has done on the Health Committee, of which he has been an assiduous member. I cannot remember a time in the life of the Assembly when he was not on the Committee. I also thank him for his work on behalf of our constituents in Strangford, which we are both fond of and hold dear. Thank you, Kieran, for everything that you have done in public life.

He mentioned finances, as did others. Mr Wells and Mr Ross frequently raised the issue during the legislative stages in the House, and they were right to do so. There is no doubt — I think that I have been open from the outset — that it will be challenging, to put it mildly, to find all the resources required to implement everything in the Bill, certainly in short order. I do not think that that should have inhibited us from moving forward with the legislation. It is far better to have the legislation on the books and progressively implement it over time, as and when resources permit, than to wait for resources to appear. In those circumstances, we would probably never pass any legislation, or lots of it would not pass. We were right to do what we did. However, I accept and acknowledge that there will be challenges in finding the resources.

We have come a long way as a society in our attitudes to mental health, although we still have a long way to go. Our attitude has changed for the better, and that is reflected in what we have done in putting the focus of expenditure in our health and social care budget on the issue of mental health.

Mr Ross: I thank the Minister for giving way. Mr McCarthy made a point towards the end of his contribution on funding for mental health issues. The Minister will be aware that the Justice Committee has, over the last year, looked at innovative approaches to justice issues, and one of the things that struck us was how many people who come into contact with the criminal justice system have underlying mental health issues. The Justice Committee has therefore asked the two Departments collaboratively to put into the Programme for Government funding for problem-solving courts and mental health courts and to look at treating some low-level offences with a healthcare rather than a criminal justice solution.

Perhaps, given that we are talking about a collaborative approach between Justice and Health today around the Mental Capacity Bill, it is a good opportunity to raise the issue that we want to see those Departments working collaboratively again in the next mandate around some of the funding on mental health courts and how we can actually help those individuals with underlying mental health issues and, at the same time, reduce the cost of putting some of those offenders into prison for short sentences.

I did not want to miss the opportunity to raise that issue, particularly as it was raised by the Minister and Mr McCarthy.

6.15 pm

Mr Hamilton: I think that the Member makes a good point. I do not think that many of the cases that he is talking about are cases that we should see as Health issues or Justice issues; they are society-wide issues and are everybody's responsibility and challenge to meet. I hope that the new Programme for Government gives us an opportunity to look very differently at some of those types of issues where there is joint, or shared, responsibility for different aspects. I think that we should be focusing much more on producing better outcomes for the citizen in whatever circumstance that is and try to work as collaboratively as we can. There will always be difficulties, and I do not think that there is a perfect system for dealing with those sorts of issues. However, I think that we should be seeking, whether it is in Health and Justice, or Health and Education, or whatever, innovative ways of dealing with the problems we face as a society.

Before the Member intervened, I was touching on the issue of finance for mental health. Mr Wells talked about how we will probably not hear a terrible lot about this on the media. I was glad that he was able to make a contribution in the Final Stage debate, having had some ownership of the Bill at an earlier stage when he was Minister. He made the point that we probably will not hear a terrible lot in our media about this issue going through the House this evening and being a world first.

A recent BBC report — although I have to make it clear that it was a national report as opposed to a local one — reported positively on the fact that Northern Ireland was the only region in the United Kingdom to have actually

increased expenditure on mental health in the last two financial years. I say that, knowing that we have to make substantial progress to close the gap compared with other parts of the UK. However, I think that the trajectory is positive, where we have been progressively increasing expenditure even in that very tight and difficult fiscal situation, the reality of which Mr Wells pointed out.

I think that we have been doing the right thing in making good decisions in terms of increasing expenditure on mental health. We owe a lot of that to Bamford, and the vision set out in the Bamford review. Post Bamford, we have increased annual expenditure on mental health in Northern Ireland by about £50 million. It was about £200 million around 2007-08, and, in the most recent financial year, it is around £250 million, and it will increase further in the future.

Within that, I think that the most significant switch is not that we are simply spending more money but are spending it more wisely and better, and there has been a switch away from the money being spent in a hospital or institutional setting to a community-based setting. Around 60% of the expenditure on mental health is now in a community setting, so, it is helping people in their own homes, in their communities and close to their families. I think that that is something we should welcome and should continue to see grow in the future.

It is a day that many thought would not come — perhaps mostly those who were on the Ad Hoc Committee. It has come, thanks to the efforts of many people who I, and others, have referred to in the debate and who are inside and outside of government. Not least, as Minister Ford mentioned, there is the person who — to put it simply — came up with the idea in the first place, Professor David Bamford. We put on record our thanks for the contribution that he made, and for that of his successor, Professor Roy McClelland.

So, I think that it has been a useful debate. It has been a positive acknowledgement of the global first that we are seeing happen here this evening — a House passing a fused piece of legislation that Mr McCarthy talked about. Finally, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Mental Capacity Bill [NIA 49/11-16] do now pass.

Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill: Final Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

*That the Health and Personal Social Services
(Amendment) Bill [NIA 68/11-16] do now pass.*

I am pleased to move the Final Stage of the Bill, as I believe it is timely and important legislation. Regulation of the social work and social care workforce forms parts of the framework established by my Department to strengthen public protection and safeguards for service users in Northern Ireland. It makes a key contribution to providing independent assurance to the public that those responsible for the delivery of social care across Northern Ireland will be held to account for their conduct against agreed standards of conduct and professional practice.

The conduct model used by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council must be fit for purpose, efficient, cost-effective and command the confidence of service users, the wider public and the social care workforce. The Care Council's current conduct model was put in place in 2003 and, while it has ensured that those who are unsuitable to provide care have been excluded from the workforce, the council has been restricted in the sanctions available for misconduct that does not merit removal from the register. The aim of the Bill is to modernise the Care Council's conduct model so that it reflects best practice models used by other workforce regulators, particularly those used by professional healthcare regulators here in Northern Ireland and across the United Kingdom.

Through the Bill, I want to ensure that the Care Council continues to promote the highest standards and practice. That will be achieved through, first, modernising the Care Council's model of conduct by extending the range of sanctions available to it in the disposal of conduct cases, and, secondly, by extending the Care Council's powers to formally recognise the learning achievements of social workers.

As I explained to Members at the Second Stage in December last year, the existing conduct model is based on a determination of misconduct. The current range of sanctions allows the council to take action against registrants through admonishments, suspension from the register and, the most serious sanction of all, removal from the register. However, when compared with other healthcare regulators, such as the General Medical Council, the current range of sanctions available to the Care Council is limited. That essentially restricts the Care Council's ability to respond flexibly and proportionately to cases where there has been misconduct or concerns about an individual's practice. That is particularly so where there are issues regarding health or competence.

The Bill proposes the introduction of two additional sanctions to be available to the Care Council, including undertakings and conditions. Those wide-ranging sanctions will enable the Care Council to require remedial action to be taken to address any shortcomings or deficits in a registrant's performance and, in so doing, to improve the quality and safety of care provided by the individual in the future.

Registration with the Care Council requires that registrants maintain and keep their knowledge and skills up to date

to be accountable for the quality and safety of their work with vulnerable people. The Bill seeks to extend the Care Council's powers to give formal recognition to the learning achievements of social workers, as at present, the legislation allows the council to award certificates to social workers only for the successful completion of formal professional training courses approved by the council. The Bill will extend the Care Council's powers so that it can recognise learning achieved by social workers to improve their knowledge and skills through a wider range of approaches to learning and development, such as academic courses, research, in-service training, e-learning and distance learning programmes.

In summary, the Bill will modernise the model of conduct used by the Care Council so that it keeps in line with regulatory best practice and gives it the powers to recognise the learning achievements of social workers achieved through a broader range of learning methods. It is timely for those improvements to be implemented for the benefit of registrants, service users and the public and to ensure that the Care Council's regulatory practice reflects a modern approach to the regulation system of the social work and social care workforces in Northern Ireland.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee, I welcome the Final Stage of the Bill.

The objective of the Bill, as the Minister outlined, is to modernise the model of the code of conduct used by the Social Care Council to bring it into line with other health and social care regulators. A further feature of the Bill will be extending opportunities for the recognition of the continuous professional development activity of social workers post registration.

The evidence received on the Bill at Committee Stage was straightforward and very supportive of the clauses. The only issue that the Committee pursued related to clause 2, which provides powers to disclose information about a person's fitness to practise.

The Committee sought a written ministerial assurance that those powers are in line with a person's data protection rights under other pieces of legislation, and the Minister subsequently provided this written assurance. No amendments were proposed to any of the clauses, either by the Committee or by the Department. I am pleased to see the Bill reaching its Final Stage today and look forward to seeing its implementation in the future.

Mrs Dobson: I am also very happy that this Bill has reached its conclusion. It is a practical piece of legislation, and I am very pleased that the Social Care Council will now have greater powers to recognise the achievements of its workers. The only further point that I will make today is one I have made several times before: I urge the Department, and the NISCC in particular, to work very closely and carefully with the sector to ensure that undue pressure is not placed on employees.

Mr McCarthy: I am pleased to support the Final Stage and to pass on my thanks and congratulations to all those involved in getting us to where we are this evening. It is simple and straightforward legislation, but it offers those in social work additional recognition of their professional standards, and gives greater reassurance to the public.

I want to put on record my personal thanks to the carers who come into my home. They do a fantastic job.

It is, of course, right that we continue to praise the critical role that social workers play in supporting so many of our people, especially the most vulnerable, in a whole range of settings across our society. We should also recognise that social workers are being asked to take more and more varied roles and responsibilities, and, again, my experience is that they do so very willingly. It is fully appreciated.

In conclusion, this legislation recognises their critical and growing role and their existing professional standards. Through this type of regulation, they will be on a better, more level playing field when compared with their peers in other professions. The Alliance Party is happy to support the Final Stage of the Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill.

Mr Hamilton: I thank Members for their contributions. I particularly thank the members of the Health Committee and the Chair for undertaking rigorous and careful scrutiny of the Bill and for the interest and support that it has consistently shown. This Bill will ensure that the Social Care Council's conduct model is modernised and reflects regulatory best practice so that those who deliver social services in Northern Ireland are subject to fair and proportionate sanctions in respect of deficits in performance, and that learning attained through a variety of approaches by social workers can be recognised. I am also convinced that the Bill will help to increase the confidence of those who rightly expect to receive only the highest standards of care, by ensuring that only those who are suitable and competent to work in social work and social care do so. I ask Members to support this Bill at its Final Stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill [NIA 68/11-16] do now pass.

Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill: Final Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [NIA 72/11-16] do now pass.

I am pleased to move the Final Stage of this Bill in the Assembly today. When I reflect on its passage, I think it is fair to say that its scope and purpose have changed quite markedly since I introduced it in the Assembly on 30 November last year. Initially, the Bill focused on two main areas. Part 1 contained provisions dealing with nicotine products that will enable the Department to make regulations prohibiting the sale of nicotine products to under-18s; to create an offence for proxy purchasing — in other words, an adult purchasing a nicotine product on behalf of a minor; to develop regulations in relation to banning the sale of e-cigarettes from vending machines, and to raise the level of fines for sales of tobacco from vending machines to a level five fine, thus ensuring fines for all underage tobacco or e-cigarette sales offences are consistent.

Part 2 of the Bill sought to amend anomalies in the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The amendments were mainly technical in nature and sought to correct references to the various categories of people and bodies responsible for providing dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services. It also amended provisions concerning charges for services provided to persons not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland.

6.30 pm

I move now to the provisions that seek to prohibit the sale of nicotine products, including e-cigarettes, to those under 18. The sale and use of those products has grown considerably in popularity since the ban on smoking in public places was introduced in 2007. Limited research is available on the long-term health consequences of e-cigarettes, and, while they may have a role to play in harm reduction for existing smokers, I do not wish to see non-smokers, particularly children and young people, becoming addicted to nicotine through these products.

A survey that was carried out in 2015 showed that around 13% of 11- to 18-year-olds in the UK reported that they had used an e-cigarette. That represents an increase of almost 3% from the previous year. Whilst e-cigarette manufacturers do not recommend their sale to under-18s, and some retailers impose their own age restrictions, the lack of regulatory oversight has increased the likelihood of e-cigarettes being purchased by children and young people. I believe, therefore, that it is important that we protect our children, as Governments in England and Wales have chosen to do, by making e-cigarettes age-restricted products.

As the Bill progressed through its Committee scrutiny, amendments were proposed that sought to introduce a number of new provisions in the Bill and which acted as a stimulus for substantial debate. I will briefly touch on those issues. At the Bill's Consideration Stage, back in February, the Assembly agreed an amendment tabled by Sinn Féin Members to ban the use of tobacco or nicotine products in enclosed vehicles when children are present. Around 80% of second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless.

That can inadvertently make people think that it is safe to smoke around others. However, evidence suggests that there are no safe levels of exposure to second-hand smoke. Research also shows that smoking in vehicles can place passengers at a greater risk of second-hand smoke exposure due to the confined internal environment. Children are more susceptible to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke than adults. That is partly because their immune system and lungs are less developed, and they breathe more rapidly and their smaller bodies can absorb more toxins.

At Further Consideration Stage, I tabled an amendment that sought to introduce a new clause. I also proposed some technical amendments, which, I believed, would strengthen the Bill and demonstrate my clear determination to tackle smoking and the dangers it poses for children. I am pleased to say that the Assembly was persuaded by the arguments setting out the merits of my new clause and my other amendments. As a result, I am convinced that we now have much tighter legislation, which will result in the more effective implementation of regulations aimed at protecting the future health of our children.

At Consideration Stage, the Assembly also agreed an amendment tabled by Sinn Féin Members that required the Department to consult about a levy on sugar-sweetened drinks. It aimed to prescribe key issues that my Department should consult on, as well as which stakeholders should be consulted. I opposed the amendment and cited a number of reasons for my opposition. For example, I believe that we need to do more to educate people about sugar before moving to legislate. There is also a lack of evidence that shows the impact on health outcomes and not just on purchasing behaviour. My concern is that a levy on sugar-sweetened drinks might simply cause people to switch to other unhealthy foods, with the result that the problem is displaced but not solved. Finally, there are arguments that such a tax is regressive and that the tax does not, by itself, combat obesity but could potentially exacerbate food poverty.

On my last point, I note that, in Mexico, a 10% tax on sugar-sweetened was implemented on 1 January 2014. More than 30% of the Mexican population is obese, and the tax was introduced to combat the growing obesity problem, not to raise revenue. In 2015, Mexico's National Institute of Public Health and the University of North Carolina carried out research, which showed that they have not seen any changes in obesity as a result of the changes in purchasing behaviour. However, the largest impact was on lower-income households, which cut their purchases of sugar-sweetened drinks by an average of 9%. That appears to highlight the potentially regressive nature of the tax and is one of the reasons why I have expressed my concerns and continue to hold those concerns.

My position is that we need to seek to educate and inform people much better about sugar-sweetened drinks. That is why, at Further Consideration Stage, I tabled an amendment that sought to remove the duty to consult on a levy on sugar-sweetened drinks and to replace it with a duty to carry out a study on a sugar-sweetened drinks levy. I also tabled an amendment seeking to extend the period within which the study must be carried out to two years after enactment. That was to reflect the complexity of the issues and to give the Department more time to commission appropriate studies and advice and to

consider them fully before reporting on a study. I am pleased to say that the Assembly was persuaded again by my arguments and accepted both amendments. As a result, I am convinced that we now have a more realistic time frame in which to undertake a study, which should, in turn, provide us with more comprehensive information about how we should best move forward on the issue of a sugar-sweetened drinks levy.

At Consideration Stage, the Assembly also agreed amendments that require the Department to promote and provide information on transplantation and to provide an annual report on transplantation. It has been said many times during our debates that, in Northern Ireland, we have a tried-and-tested voluntary registration system. I also believe that our record in Northern Ireland on promoting the organ donor register speaks for itself with regard to raising awareness. I again take the opportunity, as many did during debates on the Bill, to pay tribute to the transplantation team at Belfast City Hospital and to remember that the work that it has undertaken has seen live organ donation rates in Northern Ireland rise to a level that is now the very best in Europe and also stands amongst the best in the world.

I am also aware that we have consistently been urged by clinicians, medical experts and interest groups to increase our efforts to educate the public about organ donation and enhance the existing level of awareness on that important matter. As I fully understand the motivation behind the amendments that were tabled at Consideration Stage and that now appear as clauses 15 and 16, I decided to propose a number of technical amendments at Further Consideration Stage in an attempt to ensure that the language used in the clauses is clearer and more easily understood. One of the key challenges in increasing the rate of organ donation is to convert the relatively high number of potential donors on the register to actual donations with family approval above the current average of 60%.

I am, therefore, establishing a clinical advisory group to develop a communications policy with a wide ambit to implement a programme targeted at achieving that increase. I will make available the resource to deliver this programme. That will be in addition to the promotional activities encouraging people to join the register. I will place a copy of the terms of reference for the clinical advisory group in the Assembly Library before recess. My Department will brief the Health Committee on the communications policy that is produced by the group later this year, subject to the approval of whoever is Health Minister at that time. Again, I am pleased to say that the Assembly accepted the rationale behind my amendments and was prepared to accept them.

I am grateful to all those who engaged with my Department on the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill and offered their insights and suggested amendments at the various stages of the Bill's journey through the Assembly. I express my gratitude to members of the Health Committee for their thorough scrutiny of the Bill and for the time that they took to examine the clauses and take evidence from witnesses. I am also grateful for their helpful contributions and support during the debates in the House. I am convinced that the provisions in the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will help to make a positive and lasting difference to the health of people throughout Northern Ireland across a broad

range of areas. Therefore, I encourage all Members to support the Bill.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I welcome the Final Stage of the Bill. As the Minister outlined, the Bill has been significantly altered, and I believe that it has been altered for the better with regard to its nature and operation.

The Bill started off with two main purposes: first, to allow the Department to make regulations on banning the sale of nicotine-containing products to minors; and, secondly, to amend existing provisions in areas such as dental services, pharmaceutical services and charges for services provided to persons not ordinarily resident. However, as the Minister outlined, the Bill widened somewhat as a result of its passage through the Assembly, with the inclusion of the provision on smoking in cars carrying minors, the promotion and reporting of organ transplantation and organ donation, and the study by the Department on a levy on sugar-sweetened drinks.

The evidence received by the Committee on the Bill as introduced was positive. There was firm support for banning the sale of nicotine-containing products to persons under 18 years of age. That support was carried through to the creation of an offence for proxy purchasing for nicotine-containing products. Very little comment was made on the clauses that amend provisions in areas such as dental and pharmaceutical services and charges for services provided to persons not ordinarily resident. However, stakeholders were content with the provisions as made.

There was significant comment on what was not included in the Bill: the banning of smoking in cars carrying minors. During Committee Stage, the Department provided the text of an amendment that would give it regulation-making powers to allow for the creation of offences for smoking in a smoke-free private vehicle and failing to prevent smoking in a smoke-free private vehicle where under-18s were present and also for fixed penalty notices to be applied to that offence. The Committee welcomed the new policy and agreed to support the amendment, which was subsequently tabled by the Minister at Further Consideration Stage and supported by the House.

The Committee considered the provisions on transplantation and organ donation as part of its scrutiny of the Human Transplantation Bill. The majority of the Committee supported the duty to promote and report on transplantation and organ donation. I am pleased that the Bill has reached Final Stage today and look forward to its implementation.

I will make a number of comments now as an individual MLA. I welcome the inclusion of my party's three amendments, albeit that, to some extent, they amended themselves, particularly the ban on smoking in cars carrying under-18s. That, quite simply, is the right thing to do. The right approach to public health involves the early intervention and prevention that we hear and speak so much about. This is simply to protect children from the effects of second-hand smoke or from even taking up smoking. The stark fact remains that 2,300 people die every year in the North from tobacco-related illnesses. I welcome support for that amendment and hope that it goes

some way to playing its part in the delivery of a robust tobacco strategy across the North and across the island.

Moving to the amendment on the sugar tax levy, I thank Members for their support. It needs to be stressed that this is not a panacea for all our ills, but it is, in our view, the right public health approach. There is a direct link between sugar consumption and ill health, whether that be diabetes, obesity, dental decay or, in many cases, cardiovascular disease. Our amendment, which has been further amended by the Minister, provides an evidence base of the impact and details how a levy on sugar sweetened drinks would be administered, and I welcome the fact that it has progressed to Final Stage.

I welcome the amendment on organ donation and human transplantation, and I acknowledge the work that Jo-Anne Dobson did to take her Bill to a certain point in the legislative process. I do not think that I need to rehearse the very stringent and robust evidence that we heard or the learning that we all underwent from her Bill. However, we have something going forward in law that is what the clinicians and charities asked us to do. It does what it says on the tin. We now have a responsibility to the Department of Health to promote and report on organ donation. That should not be the end of the road for transplantation or organ donation, but, as we stand here today, it is the appropriate legislation.

Finally, as these are my last comments as Chair of the Health Committee, I want to pay particular tribute to the staff and Clerk of the Committee. All in the House will acknowledge that the portfolio is a wide and varied one, and I pay particular tribute to the staff who have done that work very diligently. I also pay tribute to the departmental officials who often had to bear my wrath and that of the Committee and did so in a very professional manner.

I also want to join in the love-in that has broken out in the Chamber today and thank the other Committee members. I pay tribute to the current Health Minister for his cooperation on a number of key issues, and, in particular, I pay tribute to Kieran McCarthy. During my baptism of fire in this brief in the last number of years, I thank him for his input and his valuable role. Suffice it to say, Kieran, that "Any other business" will never be the same again without you.

6.45 pm

Mr McCarthy: Will the Member give way?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I will indeed.

Mr McCarthy: Exactly. I was going to remind the Member that she will probably remember me best for "Any other business". It was usually at the end of a busy agenda that I had planned in my head to raise something that had cropped up during the week. You were always very generous in allowing me to raise any other business. Thankfully, action was taken to remedy the problems as far as possible. I thank you for that. Thanks, Mr Speaker.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Member for his kind comments. Most certainly, Kieran, that is what you will be remembered for. I am not sure that I would go as far as to say that it was only things that had just occurred to you in the course of the meeting, but well played, nonetheless. You did your best with it, and, again, I wish you and your extended family every success for the future.

I thank Committee members for their cooperation on the legislation and, indeed, on the heavy legislative lift that the Committee has had in the last number of weeks and months. I will leave it at that. I welcome the fact that we have taken this to the Final Stage.

Mrs Dobson: I am pleased that the Bill has reached this stage. The Assembly has a relatively good record in adopting policies designed to assist people to give up smoking and to stop others taking up the habit in the first place. We need to remember just how damaging it is to a person's health. Every time a smoker has a cigarette, they inhale over 4,000 chemicals. For as long as it remains the greatest cause of preventable death and disease in Northern Ireland, the Assembly must continue to take a hands-on attitude to tackling smoking. Crucially, that includes preventing young people becoming addicted in the first place, and, therefore, I am pleased that today's Bill prohibits the sale of nicotine products to under-18s and from vending machines. Whilst e-cigarettes are leading to people coming off the traditional tobacco cigarette, insufficient research exists on their long-term health effects. The Assembly may need to revisit that in the next mandate.

The ban on smoking in cars carrying young people is another positive aspect of the Bill. Smoking causes harm not only to the individual but to those around them, particularly children, whose lungs are still developing. The toxic cocktail of chemicals that quickly builds up in cars should hopefully now occur even less.

I am hopeful that the human transplantation and organ donation aspect of the Bill will ensure that the passionate volunteers and charities who have promoted organ donation across Northern Ireland for many decades will no longer do so alone. I again urge that their involvement be central to any public awareness campaign to ensure that their considerable expertise and knowledge is utilised to the full.

Organ donation and transplantation affects so many families across Northern Ireland. Those of us in that organ donation family remain firmly committed to ensuring the promotion of and increase in life-saving transplants. The House is more than aware of the considerable public support for change that has been consistently identified. I again say that I do not wish this can to be kicked down the road, and, like my esteemed colleague Mr McCarthy, I, too, will be watching. I hope that the future Health Minister, whoever he or she may be, will ensure a consistent focus on increasing life-saving transplants and, indeed, will listen to the organ donation family, those who are closest to one of the most emotional issues that we can debate in the Chamber.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Bill and its passage today. The important outworkings for us all will come when the ink is dry.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I call Kieran McCarthy.

Mr McCarthy: Right, Mr Deputy Speaker, this is it. This is the last. What is contained in this is the last opportunity, so listen carefully. I cannot believe, after 18 years in this Assembly, that this is it, but I will go for it anyway. This has been the busiest day of my life in the Assembly. I have been up and down like a yo-yo. You will be glad to see the back of me.

I welcome the Final Stage of the Bill. The Bill has evolved significantly over past weeks in several beneficial ways. We would, perhaps, have benefited more from structured

consideration of the amendments that emerged through the Committee. Nonetheless, we have a positive result. In particular, I welcome the move towards banning smoking in vehicles with children. Like every Member who has spoken, I want to see the end of that, so that we put our children at no risk whatever.

I feel a lot of sympathy for my colleague Jo-Anne Dobson, who, despite valiant efforts on the organ donation issue, was not successful in getting her Bill through. However, I am sure that there will be another day. I had the pleasure of meeting her son Mark this afternoon in the Hall. He is a walking example of what organ donation can do. I hope, Jo-Anne, that, in the future, you will have more success.

Mrs Dobson: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: Yes.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Member for his continued support and loyalty. I, for one, will miss him greatly. When I joined the Health Committee, Kieran, you were an inspiration and a support, and you remained steadfast and committed throughout. I also had the honour of working with you on the Agriculture Committee and on mental capacity. I will never look at Kircubbin again without thinking of you and all those references you made.

Mr McCarthy: Even today.

Mrs Dobson: Even today. You have been a true friend to me, and I thank you for that.

Mr McCarthy: Thank you, Jo-Anne, for your compliments. Even today, Kircubbin was on the agenda at the ARD Committee.

Much work lies ahead in implementing the legislation and delivering on its components. I look forward to seeing that work completed from outside and the wider public health and societal benefits that it will bring.

As this is my very last contribution to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the Chamber, I want to thank our Chair of the Health Committee, Maeve McLaughlin, who chaired our Committee very well, kept us on the right road and was liberal in her attitude towards what one could say. Thank you very much, Maeve, for your help along the way. Indeed, I thank every other MLA on the Committee for their help and cooperation, particularly in Committee deliberations. That includes our Committee staff, our Assembly Research and Information Service and everyone who contributed to making our Health Committee positive and getting us to where we are this evening.

I want to thank Maeve's predecessor as Chair of the Health Committee, Sue Ramsey, who, Members will remember, was very competent in the job and who, through ill health, was not able to carry on. I thank you both very much for your work on that Committee.

I thank Simon Hamilton as Minister for responding positively to my petition not so long ago on the needs of youngsters and adults with autism. Simon Hamilton came up with £2 million to put to that much-needed cause. Unfortunately, too many parents have kids nowadays with autism, but they were grateful for that assistance from Mr Hamilton.

Finally, I offer a genuine invitation to any Member when they visit the revamped Exploris aquarium in Portaferry. *[Laughter.]*

Cash was provided by our Executive and, indeed, Mark Durkan. As you enter my village of Kircubbin to get to Portaferry —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Deputy Speaker has been very generous today.

Mr McCarthy: — do stop and pay me a visit, but do not all come at once, for God's sake. *[Laughter.]* I want you to stop and bring me up to date with what is happening in this place. Everyone is very welcome, and perhaps they can have a cup of tea or a cup of coffee overlooking Strangford lough. You may remember that, this morning, I waved the bus pass. I am going to use that bus pass, along with my wife, hopefully. Beware, everybody, because I am going to visit Castlederg, Kilrea — wherever you come from and wherever you come from. *[Laughter.]* I want to see maybe a cup of tea or coffee or something.

Go raibh maith agat and slán go fóill. Ta tae yez aw an sae lang the noo. Thank you, everybody, very much, and a sincere goodbye. *[Applause.]*

Mr Hamilton: I do not think I am going to top that, Deputy Speaker. I think many of us will now be a little concerned about being stalked by Mr McCarthy as he uses his Executive-granted free bus pass to travel around Northern Ireland. He will be very welcome in Comber at any time, as he knows.

I thank the Members who contributed for their very positive and encouraging remarks about this legislation. I think it is very clear from today's debate, as has been clear from all the debates as the Bill passed through the House in its various stages, that this is a piece of legislation that has captured the interest of Members and has generated some very useful and informed debate on a diverse range of important health topics. I am also pleased that the Bill largely enjoyed cross-party support as it progressed through its various stages.

In summary, the Bill will help to protect people's lives and health, especially the health and well-being of children, from the dangers of nicotine and tobacco products. It will afford us the opportunity to carry out a proper study on a levy on sugar-sweetened drinks, which could then allow us to move towards work on specific proposals thereafter. Finally, it will help to raise the public awareness of organ donation, with the intention that increased promotion will result in the outcomes required for an increase in donor rates. In this, my last contribution in the House on what the Chair, I think euphemistically, described as a wide and varied brief that is Health, I ask Members to support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [NIA 72/11-16] do now pass.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill: Final Stage

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): I beg to move

That the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill [NIA 78/11-16] do now pass.

I do not intend to address the content of the Bill to any great extent. This is a seven-clause Bill with a single aim, which is to ensure that citizens in Northern Ireland whose land has been subject to compulsory purchase are treated equally to their counterparts in England and Wales who enjoy enhanced compensation payments. The Bill will bring us into line with the more favourable position in England and Wales by reflecting the legislative changes introduced there with the abolition of farm loss payments and the introduction of two new payments: a basic loss payment and an occupier's loss payment.

7.00 pm

The Bill was introduced to the House on 22 February, and the accelerated passage and Second Stage debates took place on 1 March. I am grateful to the Members of the Assembly for the contributions they made to those debates. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Chairman and the members of the Committee for Regional Development and to all my Assembly colleagues for their cooperation and agreement to the Bill proceeding by way of the accelerated passage process. Without that cooperation, it would not be possible for the Bill to have reached all its Assembly stages within this mandate. The fact that no amendments were tabled at either Consideration Stage on 7 March or, indeed, at Further Consideration Stage on 14 March further indicates, I believe, that Members of the Assembly are content with the purpose of the Bill.

With that, I am happy to respond to any comments Members may wish to make during the debate.

Mr Clarke (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): I do not really have much to add to what the Minister said. I know that a lot of people today have reflected on the contributions that have been made in the Assembly during this mandate, and I want to put on record my thanks to the Minister. I have spoken to many people who are going to lose land as a result of the A6, and whilst it is seen as progress for many, some see it disadvantaging their farm practice. However, the people along the A6 whom I have spoken to welcome the fact that the Minister has moved to bring us into line with the rest of the UK by giving them the advantage of that additional 10%. The Minister talked today about providing a more favourable position, and I think that an additional 10% for those losing land is a favourable position. It is an opportunity that has been missed in the past and, on reflection, it is disappointing that we were not here sooner. I can only say, however, that, if it were not for this Minister in her term in office, the people along the A6 and, indeed, the A5 would continue to be disadvantaged. So I put on record my thanks to the current Minister. I wish her well in the forthcoming Assembly elections. I wish her the best, and I hope she comes back to continue the work that she has been doing.

Mr Speaker, if you will allow me, I also want to pay tribute to you for the fairness that you have shown to many of us in the Chamber in your time. I wish you well in your retirement; indeed, I wish all those who are retiring at this time well. I also wish those standing for election well. These last few weeks have shown that work can be done in this place. There has been a huge amount of delivery, albeit it was late in the term. We have put our shoulders to the wheel and pushed, and we have got there. Given that the A6 comes through part of my constituency, this land acquisition legislation typifies for me what we can do to change the lives of some people. As I said, whilst they are giving up land, they will get an additional payment, and that should remove part of the burden on them.

I think that, when the will is there, we can work together for the betterment of everyone. This is not an orange or green issue. It is not about community background, where someone goes on a Sunday or their place of worship. It is about everyday things that are valuable to people.

I want to close by again thanking the Minister for bringing this forward and thanking Members for their patience in allowing accelerated passage so that we could get this in before the end of the mandate.

Mr Lynch: I also welcome the Bill and, like the Chair, commend the Minister for bringing this forward in such a short period. It is to be welcomed, given the Minister's recent announcements that the A5 and the A6 are to go ahead. It is only fair that those landowners who will be giving up their land and property are compensated on the same basis as in other jurisdictions.

As this is the last business of the Regional Development Committee, I want to put on record my party's thanks to the Chair and to the previous Chair, Jimmy Spratt, with whom we got on very well and worked well. The work of the Committee over the past five years has been positive and constructive, producing excellent reports. I will only name two of them: 'A Report on the Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy'; and 'A Report on the Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport'.

I am led to believe that three people are leaving the Committee: John Dallat, Stephen Moutray and, not least, David McNarry. He will certainly be missed. As Deputy Chair, I also want to put on record our thanks to the officials who have worked with and assisted us over that period.

To conclude, I want to acknowledge the role of —

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. I just cannot sit down tonight. I have to ask something. You mentioned the cycling. Is the Member up for another cycle along the Wild Atlantic Way, as we had when I was on the Regional Development Committee? Remember, you and I went ahead; the rest fell behind. They could not keep up with us. Would you be up for another one? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Lynch: Certainly. Thanks for that contribution. I actually thought the Minister had concluded a couple of minutes ago. I remember cycling on the Atlantic Way. I am sorry that I am not able, for injury reasons, to cycle any more.

As I said, I want to acknowledge the role of the Committee staff and all those who have supported us over this mandate.

Finally, a Cheann Comhairle, I want to wish you well. I have known you for many years, even before coming to the

House, and I have always said that you are gentleman and the right person for this role. Go raibh míle maith agat, and all the best for the future.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much. Now back to the Minister. I hope I have not caught you unawares.

Miss M McIlveen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am grateful to Members who have contributed to the debate. As others have said, I believe that the Bill will ensure that land and property owners in Northern Ireland will be compensated on a fairer basis and on the same basis as their counterparts in England and Wales. Land being taken is not easy under any circumstances, and it is particularly difficult for landowners. I want to recognise that. However, I hope that this goes, in some small way, towards helping those landowners as they move forward in the future.

I, again, thank the Chairman and the members of the Committee for Regional Development and all Assembly Members for their cooperation during the passage of the Bill.

I pay tribute to outgoing members of the Committee who have decided not to stand for election again, in particular my party colleague Stephen Moutray, my constituency colleague David McNarry, and John Dallat, for their contributions to the Committee. It would be remiss of me, given that he is here this evening, not to pay tribute — although he was not a member of the Regional Development Committee during my time — to my friend Kieran McCarthy. We served on Ards Borough Council together, and we have been friends throughout. He has been my colleague in the constituency for over 10 years. I will miss his contribution, but, of course, that is dependent upon whether I get back to this House myself. I will miss his friendship.

In conclusion, I commend the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill to the House.

Mr Speaker: For a moment there, I thought that you were going to provoke Kieran into another contribution. *[Laughter.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill [NIA 78/11-16] do now pass.

Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): I beg to move

That the draft Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

This statutory rule is being made under powers contained in the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, which prescribes that this order must be laid in draft for approval by affirmative resolution of the Assembly.

The Northern Ireland renewables obligation, or NIRO as it is known, has been the main support mechanism for incentivising renewable electricity generation in Northern Ireland since 2005. The NIRO has been instrumental in increasing renewables deployment in Northern Ireland from 3% of renewable electricity consumption in 2005 to just over 25% now. This significantly exceeds the Executive's ambitious Programme for Government target of having a fifth of our electricity generated from renewables by 2015. I take this opportunity to commend the renewables industry and infrastructure providers for helping us to reach that impressive figure.

I now move to the business at hand. In March last year, we issued a consultation on the proposed closure of the NIRO. That resulted in the partial closure of the NIRO to non-wind technologies in autumn 2015. On 30 September last year, I issued a further consultation on closure for onshore wind projects of all sizes from 1 April 2016. That followed similar announcements in Great Britain. The consultation proposed exceptions to closure in the form of grace periods for projects that were able to meet specific criteria.

Some 477 responses were received from a range of stakeholders, including members of the public, independent generators, developers, trade associations, energy suppliers, and non-governmental organisations. I thank everyone who took the time to respond. A large number of responses objected to the proposed closure, but around 20% were supportive. The majority of objections were from small-scale wind developers. The large-scale sector, whilst unhappy with the proposals, was keen for the legislation to be progressed in order to secure financial closure.

Following the closure of the consultation, and in acknowledgment of the concerns raised, I wrote again in November 2015 to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change seeking further flexibility on the closure of the NIRO to small-scale wind generators. Her response offered no further concessions on eligibility dates or criteria. She reaffirmed her position that, if Northern Ireland diverged from GB policy, she would seek to protect GB consumers by de-socialising the costs of Northern Ireland projects that do not meet the eligibility criteria set out in the consultation document. Indeed, provisions have been included in the Energy Bill to allow for that.

The provisions, if passed, will allow the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to make regulations restricting the tradability of certain Northern Ireland renewables obligation certificates (NIROCs), meaning that GB suppliers cannot use them to meet their renewables obligation. That means that the market for such non-redeemable NIROCs would be limited to Northern Ireland. I understand that DECC intends to apply its provision in the Energy Bill only to NIROCs that do not meet the eligibility

criteria set out in my consultation of 30 September 2015. In light of the DECC decision, the views expressed by the Committee and the responses to the consultation, I have decided to take a two-stage approach to closure to onshore wind, separating large- and small-scale onshore wind.

I have decided that the NIRO will close to new large-scale onshore wind-generating stations from 1 April 2016, in line with the 30 September consultation proposals. That means that projects that meet the approved development grace period eligibility criteria of being able to demonstrate that they have an accepted grid connection offer, relevant planning permission and evidence of land rights, as of 30 September 2015 for non-cluster connections and 30 October 2015 for cluster connections, will be able to accredit their stations up to 31 March 2017.

In addition, if those projects meet the eligibility criteria for the radar or grid delay grace period, they can seek accreditation up to 31 March 2018.

7.15 pm

A further nine-month investment freezing grace period will be available to projects that can demonstrate that they have been unable to secure financial investment during the period between DECC's announcement on 18 June 2015 and when the Northern Ireland legislation comes into operation. That grace period is being introduced in Great Britain, and I think it only right that projects here can have similar access. Projects that qualify for just the investment freeze grace period will have until 31 December 2017 to accredit under the NIRO. Projects that also benefit from the radar and grid delay grace period will have until 31 December 2018 to accredit.

I have decided to initiate a further consultation on the closure for small-scale projects. The NIRO will, therefore, remain open for the time being for small-scale projects until further consultation is completed. The consultation will need to be set against the backdrop of the potential effect of the DECC provisions and the implications of restricted NIROCs in the market. It is my intention to issue the consultation as soon as possible.

The proposed closure order will provide the legislative certainty that large-scale onshore wind developers require to secure financial close. Hopefully, that will enable those projects to proceed to deployment, further enhancing our renewables contribution.

Mr McGlone (The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister.

When the Renewables Obligation Closure Order first came to the Committee on 30 June last year, it was a closure order for all technologies covered under the NIRO. The Committee was informed that the legislation had to be rushed through to provide certainty to investors in one particular energy-from-waste project. It was clear at that time that the Department had not fully considered the wider consequences of the proposed legislation and, in particular, the impact on consumers.

The original proposals, which deviated from GB proposals and allowed for the continuation of the NIRO for all onshore wind projects up to 2017, would, by the Department's admission, have added up to £16 a year

to bills for domestic consumers and up to an average of £30,000 a year to bills for average large-scale electricity consumers. The Department was unable to provide the Committee with any figures for savings or benefits to consumers that could accrue from having the legislation in place or for the cost associated with the administration of the scheme. The Department had conducted no consultation on the impact of the proposals for onshore wind on businesses or domestic consumers here.

The Committee suggested dealing with the two separate issues by way of separate legislation. However, the Department stated that the legislation was about closing the NIRO to everyone rather than a piecemeal approach. For the record, we have three types of approach now — two anyway; potentially three. The following week, on 2 July, Committee members and I met the Minister and asked that he explore the possibility of separating the legislation to give certainty to those who needed it urgently and to give time to consider the costs and benefits of other options for consumers and developers in respect of onshore wind. We were told emphatically that that would not be possible.

On 9 July, the Department came to the Committee again. At that stage, officials informed the Committee that the Department had taken legal advice that outlined the reasons why decoupling the legislation would not — in fact, could not — be feasible. It later transpired that the legal advice was in the form of what was referred to as an informal request for information. I do not know whether that was a packet of cigarettes, a packet of matches or what it was, but it was what we were supposed to rely on.

The Department also informed the Committee on 9 July that there had been a fundamental change on the issue of costs as:

“an unexpected and very significant policy change was announced by DECC”,

which would mean that projects already in the system would be permitted to connect until March 2018. Under close Committee questioning, the Department had to concede that there was no basis for that statement as no evidence existed in any papers from DECC that that was the case. Eventually, on 8 September, the Department brought proposals to the Committee for the closure of the NIRO to all non-wind projects, thus allowing the certainty needed for those who required it urgently and allowing time for adequate consideration to be given to proposals for the closure of the NIRO to wind projects. That course of action had first been proposed by the Committee in June.

Had the Committee not intervened on 30 June, the Department would have been content to put in place legislation at a total estimated cost of up to £35 million per annum for the next 20 years for all electricity consumers. To put that in context, £35 million represents approximately five times the estimated savings per year to consumers here of having the North/South interconnector in place.

At its meeting last week on 8 March, the Committee heard oral evidence from departmental officials on the current policy proposals in the SL1 for the closure of renewables obligations to new large-scale onshore wind generation and additional large-scale generating facilities adding additional capacity from 1 April 2016. The Minister informed the Committee that the intention was to consult

further on closure arrangements for new small-scale onshore wind. The SL1 was approved following a Division in the Committee. The statutory rule was considered by the Committee only this afternoon, just one week after the policy proposal came to the Committee as an SL1. By way of a Division, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Renewables Obligation Closure Order (NI) 2016 be approved by the Assembly.

I will now speak briefly in my capacity as an MLA. I have been about the Assembly since 2003, and I genuinely have never seen such poor, badly informed, badly presented and unreliable evidence as we received on this one. It moved with the wind and with whatever interpretation anyone sought to bring to bear on it. It was by close scrutiny by all members of the Committee, acting as a Committee should act here, that we sought to bring some closure to the issue. We were told on 30 June that legislation had to be rushed. Here we are, after a nine-month kind of gestation period, bringing some of it lastminute.com to the Assembly.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for giving way. Tonight, we are asked to back a split decision in terms of the additional consultation. Does the Member agree that the conditions that the Minister has pointed to — the fact that there is potential for restricted NIROCs and question marks around grid connection confirmation — mean that this is not a consultation? The outcomes are extremely limited.

Mr McGlone: It is a consultation of sorts. I am not sure what the aim of it is other than to consult and kick the tin down the alleyway; nor am I sure that it delivers any form of certainty. The mandate is ending, and the Minister cannot give assurances to the industry as to what way a Minister, whether him or someone else, can deliver on this or how DECC — it is not entirely without culpability in this — might change its position in the intervening period. We just do not know.

We have been presented with alleged legal advice that altered on a whim and moved with the wind. On the issue of decoupling, you often wonder whether you should seek alternative legal advice elsewhere that has substance and meaning and is legal and reliable for us, as MLAs, to depend on.

Large scale, as we see now, is being dealt with separately in a “lastminute.com” approach. Small scale is being dealt with separately, we hope, following the consultation — we hope. However, there is no certainty whatsoever for small scale about what the outcomes might be, given also, to be fair, the shabby way that DECC has dealt with it. It has been kicked down the alleyway.

There is no security or certainty for small scale. For that reason, I and the SDLP cannot support this. We recognise the first part that deals with large scale. It does bring certainty to them. It is probably not the sort of certainty that they would want. However, for the investment potential and projections of their business, it gives them the closure that they require for their financiers and investors. It certainly does not provide that to small-scale developers. For that reason, we, in the SDLP, cannot support this SR legislation.

Mr Dunne: I think that we all recognise that there has been considerable debate and discussion on this issue in the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. There is no doubt that our renewables sector has made significant progress over the last decade. The NIRO has been a

key part of ensuring that our healthy levels of renewable energy production have been met. We are aware of the considerable interest in the closure of the NIRO over recent months.

Onshore wind is a very important part of Northern Ireland's energy mix and by far our leading renewable technology. I am pleased that the NIRO provides a 20-year commitment of support so that existing renewable generation will continue to be supported until 2037, which reflects the level of renewable electricity at 25%, a considerable success considering all the circumstances.

It is vital that, in managing a suitable and realistic end for the Northern Ireland renewables obligation, we get a balance between protecting the interests of Northern Ireland consumers, current and planned investments and the associated economic benefits, and contributing to the Executive's targets on renewable energy. The large-scale sector is keen to get certainty around closure and financial certainty to allow for future investment. The small-scale sector, which affects mainly farmers, SMEs and other renewable investors, has expressed concern about the loss of opportunities to develop projects in the planning and development stage; I think that we all recognise that.

The consultation process on the proposed closure of small-scale wind generation is under way. The Minister will do what he can to make small-scale adjustments that are in line with the rest of the UK. Local consumers will continue to benefit from the socialisation of costs across the UK due to the favourable obligation levels that we enjoy compared with our GB counterparts. The Minister and the Department have been faced with a real dilemma on the way forward, with DECC changing its position following the general election. There is no doubt that this created uncertainty across the sector. I believe that this proposed way forward is a realistic way of ensuring that we deliver for our energy consumers and those in the renewables sector.

Finally, I thank everyone for the experience that I have had in my first term in the Assembly. It has certainly been an experience. Some Members are not standing again, including you, Mr Speaker. You have been a fair Speaker. I also pay tribute to our outgoing party leader, Peter Robinson, to Gregory Campbell and to my colleague Stephen Moutray. Best wishes to all for the future. God willing, we will see most of you back in the not-too-distant future.

7.30 pm

Mr Murphy: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As this is also my last opportunity to speak in the Assembly, I pay tribute to you for the role that you have played as Speaker over the last number of years.

In the spirit of generosity that is in the institution tonight amongst most Members, I will not dwell on the Department's role and performance in all this. I think our Chair expressed the concerns and frustrations that the Committee had in dealing with it, and I sincerely hope that, along with the handling of the RHI scheme, serious lessons are learnt in the Department on how to handle such schemes and on its relationship with the Committee.

The genesis of this situation, as with the RHI scheme, was a very abrupt change of position in London with no reference to or consultation with, I believe, this institution.

I am not sure whether there were any consultations with other devolved institutions. Amber Rudd was told that she had to reduce the subsidy budget from £9.1 billion to £7.5 billion, and suddenly the switch was turned off from these schemes. That was exacerbated by a decision by the electricity companies to place a moratorium on connections to the grids.

All that and the ending of the renewable energy scheme, on top of the closure of the renewable heat incentive scheme, have left a huge degree of uncertainty in the renewable industry. Despite the fact that the Executive are ahead of their targets for renewable energy, I think it has placed a question mark over the industry in the future and will in turn place a question mark over targets to be met in the future.

I heard what the Minister had to say about that at the Committee meeting today. One of the biggest impacts of the handling of this scheme and the previous renewable energy scheme has been the creation of a huge degree of uncertainty within the industry. I would like to see the Minister address that, particularly in the context of the large-scale industry.

As the Chair outlined, we were told all along that one closure had to be put in place to ensure that the grace period would apply to those schemes and that those involved would be able to see out their business. Is there certainty, now that the Department has gone with a two-phased approach, that DECC will accept that position and that the large-scale industry will get the certainty on the grace period it requires?

The small-scale part of the wind industry is genuinely nervous about a consultation. We want a proper and genuine consultation with the small-scale industry not only to see how it can be assisted over this period but to see what lies in the future for it.

The third point on the renewables industry is that, while both schemes will be brought to a close in the near future, there is, as I said, a great degree of nervousness, uncertainty and worry about investments that have been made, about skills that have been acquired for the schemes going forward and about what it all means for the future of the industry. The Minister, I think, and I am sure most members of the Committee, would feel that the industry has been very successful as it has developed. We live in a part of the world where there is great potential for renewables and where there is already too heavy a reliance on fossil fuels in the production of energy. Surely such an industry has to be supported.

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for giving way. I appreciate the expertise that the Member has gathered on the Committee over the last number of months since he came back. I welcome that. As with everything, all incentivisation comes at a cost. One thing I am not hearing from the opposite Benches tonight is a balance. Whilst I am not against incentivisation — I am certainly happy about the closure for large scale because we need to bank the 650MW of energy for security of supply — whatever happens for small scale in the future will have to be balanced by the cost to the bill payers, especially our industries and the bills they pay. It will have to be balanced to make sure it is affordable.

That is something that the Minister strove to do over the last number of months. He has been left in a very difficult position by Amber Rudd and the decision by the

Conservatives to end the schemes early. It has been a massive and very difficult issue, and we have been able to deal with it tonight.

Mr Murphy: I agree with the Member that there is a need to make sure that any schemes that go forward from now are sustainable. People within the industry argue that the heat initiative scheme was not sustainable and that it has left the Executive with a substantial cost to come out of the Budget annually for the next 20 years.

We need to make sure.

The larger-scale industries are confident that, in a number of years, they will be self-sustaining. That allows a new Executive in a new mandate with a new Programme for Government to have a fresh look at the targets that they need to set and initiatives that they will take to support the industry in meeting those targets. I do not have any difficulty with that when it comes to getting the balance right, but the industry needs to be supported and sustained. We need to meet those targets, and we are in a good place to do that.

I know that the Minister said in Committee this morning that he was meeting representatives of small-scale wind industries today. It would be helpful if he could update the House this evening on how that meeting went, because, as I say, there is genuine nervousness out there that the consultation will not be as genuine as it should be. We want to make sure that people have the opportunity to state their case clearly and to see whether some satisfaction can be provided for them. Going forward, it is the end of this mandate, and we are into a new mandate. The Executive need to return to this. We need to ensure that the industry does not shut down, because it would be much harder to get it started again. Strong signals of our intent for the future need to be sent now.

Mr Agnew: When the Minister spoke with the Committee this morning, he talked about our having reached the limits of affordability in our support for the renewable industry. Of course, affordability is a choice. The Executive collectively have a choice between spending all the block grant on renewables, which I do not think anyone would call for or support, and, at the other extreme, giving no further support to renewables, which I certainly cannot support. Unfortunately, that seems to be the vision that the Minister is presenting to us now and, earlier, to the Committee. Between the two extremes, however, there are many options.

We talk about affordability, and Mr Frew rightly made the point about the need to strike a balance between supporting renewables and keeping energy prices at a sustainable level for business and domestic consumers. That is the right approach to take. However, we have to ask what the cost is of not supporting renewables. What is the cost of giving no incentivisation to a sector that, in Northern Ireland, across all forms of renewables, supports in the region of 10,000 jobs? What is the cost of no support? We have heard little about that from the Minister or in the debate so far. We must explore some of the alternatives. I accept that the decisions being made by DECC and Amber Rudd are ridiculous decisions. They are short-sighted and are based on almost a prejudice rather than on any sound evidence of what is good for the economy or, indeed, good for the UK in meeting our responsibilities under the Climate Change Act 2008. However, we have to take responsibility in Northern

Ireland: energy is devolved. While we have to respond to decisions made by DECC, we cannot simply throw our hands up and say, "Well, they have decided they are going to cease supporting wind. Therefore, we must do the same". It makes the warm words of support for renewables from this Minister, his predecessor and, indeed, the wider Executive look empty.

The UK initially fully funded the renewable heat incentive, until we messed that one up, and, for renewable electricity, Great Britain carried the vast bulk of the cost of support. We said, "We support renewables. How important they are"; indeed, the Minister even told the Committee today that we must end our reliance on fossil fuels. Where is the commitment to end the reliance on fossil fuels when we are told, "Well, if you want to support the renewables industry you must pay for it. You must carry the cost immediately"? We are told, "It is unaffordable, and it's not something that we are going to choose". I repeat: it is a choice.

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for giving way. I think I am hearing him suggest that he would support a Northern Ireland ROC scheme. First, the apparatus is not there to actually sustain that, but, if it was, does the Member realise that it would cost Northern Ireland bill payers maybe £770 million over the next 20 years, which would all come from our businesses and bill payers?

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member for his intervention. What I sought from the Minister in Committee today and what I seek now is at least an exploration of the options, and I have not even heard a commitment. Maybe, in his winding speech, we will get that commitment. There are options. There is contract for difference (CFD), and, certainly, when I speak to the industry, it is not saying that, if Northern Ireland were included in CFD, projects would be unaffordable here and they would not bid in. That is not what I hear: the industry is saying that it wants CFD in Northern Ireland and wants to bid for projects through that scheme.

I suppose that, for the smaller renewables sector, we have a stay of execution proposed here today for small-scale wind. We could look at whether that is sustainable in the medium-to-long term rather than in the short term, which seems to be what is being indicated. Could we have some form of small feed-in tariff (FIT) scheme? We cannot get access to the GB small FIT scheme, but can we explore something similar? The whole argument about the approach being taken today is that small-scale generation will not add significant costs to bills if we support it. Is that an option? Is there an all-Ireland approach, given that we are in a single electricity market with the Republic of Ireland? Is there some form of all-Ireland subsidy that could be negotiated? While that would take some time, it would, at least, offer the opportunity of a way forward.

I am not saying that we should continue with what we have been doing and just pay for all of it ourselves; I am saying that I accept that what is being presented today might be the least worst option in terms of the position that DECC has put us in, but, at least, let us now say that we cannot rely on DECC — its vision is unsustainable in every sense. We need our own direction for Northern Ireland. Energy policy is devolved. We will take responsibility for it, and we will find a way forward for the renewables industry to thrive here.

There is real opportunity in renewables, and I do not want to see it being wasted. It has come so far, but the approach seems to be that we have done enough and that is good

enough. We have a target. We set a target for 40% renewable electricity by 2020, and we should be absolutely proud of how far we have come. Stopping here would be a mistake.

I know that the Minister is under a legal obligation in terms of the gas industry, despite saying that we need to end our reliance on fossil fuels. I know that he is under an obligation to promote the gas industry. To this day, the gas industry, despite being a mature industry, has never been subsidy-free. It receives subsidies when it wants to expand the grid infrastructure, including the £32.5 million direct government subsidy for the Gas to the West project. The boiler replacement scheme is another subsidy, and, indeed, the Ballylumford gas power station received a subsidy through consumer bills that put 1% on bills. Gas has never been subsidy-free. We always hear about the cost of renewables, but nobody talks about the cost of gas to bill payers or through direct subsidy. I will not even start on nuclear; the subsidies there are phenomenal.

The renewables sector is unique. Representatives of the solar and wind industries came to the Committee and said, "We are plotting a path to a subsidy-free future for renewables". Both industries have used 2021 as a target. We have been gradually reducing the subsidy for renewable energy in stages for those technologies as they mature. Even they are setting an end point. Stopping when we can see the horizon seems to me short-sighted.

7.45 pm

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Sure.

Mr Frew: The Member's point on short-sightedness is good, but he misses the elephant in the room with regard to what we pay in subsidies. Even though that is mighty, it is the actual cost of energy, not the subsidy, that could be the problem that needs to be tackled. I agree with what he said about looking at all the options. Another option is to not necessarily subsidise generation but to look at how we can subsidise the use of the energy generated by containing energy so that we can use it at more effective times. I am certainly not saying that we should throw millions at that, but it is another option that we should look at in the whole scheme of things.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member for his intervention. It is good to have this conversation. We used to have these discussions in Committee, but, unfortunately, he was moved from the Committee. I cannot think why that could have been. He makes a good point: demand-side management, energy storage — there are so many pieces to the picture. However, renewables are definitely one part. Indeed, we talk about the cost of energy, but I come back to the cost of not supporting renewables: what will the cost be if we continue to rely on fossil fuels? As supply goes down and demand goes up, we know that the price goes only one way. We need to end our reliance on fossil fuels, but, Mr Speaker, I probably need to end this speech, which was supposed to be a short one.

We need a way forward beyond what we decide today. As I said, this may be the best that we will get in the circumstances, but what we need is what comes next. That is what I want the Department, the Minister, in his limited time left in position, and the new Minister, whoever comes into office, to focus on. It is unacceptable that we stop here.

This has been quite a negative speech for my final contribution of the Assembly term. I hope that it is more of a “See you later” than a farewell, but the electorate will decide that. I came in as such a positive young man five years ago: look at what you have done to me. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McGlone: You need a bit of renewal.

Mr Agnew: I need a bit of renewal myself, as Mr McGlone points out. I remain an optimist. I believe that there are solutions to the problems that we are discussing today. I have not heard them from the Minister or the Department in recent weeks and months, but I believe that a new Assembly and Executive can and should find those solutions.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leatsa, a Cheann Comhairle, as an dóigh ar chaith tú le cúrsaí anseo. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a thabhairt duit agus gach beannacht a ghuidhe duit as an dóigh chothrom a raibh tú ag déileáil le gach duine.

I wish you well, Mr Speaker, as you move on. Some of us may not be back on 12 May, but I believe that you will be here to chair the first meeting of the new mandate. I thank you for your fairness and the courtesies that you have shown. You had a bit of a reputation, Mr Speaker, for being tough on the Sinn Féin Benches. I have survived, at least until tonight, so I will be on my best behaviour.

I have two quick points. First, you can be sure, Mr Agnew, that support for renewables will continue in the new mandate, whether I am here or not. The big parties — in fact, all parties — are, I think, united in their belief that there needs to be continued support. Let us approach the consultation seriously and look at the options ahead, including, since it is an all-island electricity market, the all-island refit. From my conversations with colleagues, everyone is up for ensuring that we continue to hit the ambitious renewables targets that we have set ourselves.

Secondly, I mentioned to the Minister today that the NIE and SONI moratorium had held up a lot of connections to the grid. Some are intimately connected to job creation and investment, including the Dale Farm solar energy plant in Cookstown. It would be useful if the Minister used his good offices to talk to NIE to see whether, even in the midst of a consultation, there is a way in which we could help some of the key projects that are stuck in the logjam but could have a real impact on jobs and investment. I do not know whether the Minister has had a chance to do that today, but I hope that he will come back on that.

I finish by thanking the Committee, its staff and the Clerks for all the help that they have given us. The Chair has shown exemplary leadership. Today, there was a little incident at home, but I believe that Mrs McGlone is as tough as her son and that everything is well there. There is no avoiding the fact that, over the last nine months, the discussion on the issue has been really disappointing, in that the Chair was not treated with courtesy and respect and was not given the information that he asked for over many months. While we will disagree on the vote later, we have a clear approach, and I hope that that continues.

Finally, I thank the Minister. Not all of the cards fell his way in recent months. Not only were there terrible job losses across the North but the goalposts were moved by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in London, and we are paying the price for that. I hope that we will pick up the pieces, move forward confidently, continue our

support for renewables and, as we enter consultation with the small-scale providers, come up with a scheme that satisfies them and their customers.

Mr Cochrane-Watson: Mr Speaker, in case I forget, I wish you every success. I believe that you will be back here on 9 May, but we will certainly miss you on the election trail in South Antrim. I wish you personally every success.

I came into the Chamber on 28 June. I was honoured to replace Danny Kinahan and delighted to be given the challenge of sitting on the ETI Committee. I take this opportunity to thank the Chairman for the welcome and support that he gave me as a new member who probably did not appreciate the work and the scrutiny role of the Committee; indeed, I extend those thanks to all members of the Committee.

At my very first Committee meeting on, I think, 29 June, the issue of renewables and the NIRO was brought up. In a way, I feel sorry for the Minister. He has always been very friendly to me, and he has probably been let down by Amber Rudd moving the goalposts in Westminster and by the communication of different information. In June, the Minister made commitments based on the relevant information. However, what we have now is a renewables shambles. I believe that DETI officials make up the rules on their way over here: “What will we tell these boys today?”. We hear differing stories and differing information. When we question them, we do not get a straight answer. I come from the world of business, and, if I were to transfer some of these experiences to my former family business, I would be bankrupt in three months. It would not be tolerated in the private sector. Decisions need to be made and honoured.

We have failed the renewables sector. A matter of weeks ago, we failed them on renewable heat incentives. We failed them when we gave commitments. In November, we failed them when we gave an understanding — I will not put it more strongly than that, although some might say that we “suggested” it — that the scheme would stay open to 31 March. We are failing them again tonight with the closure of the scheme to large-scale projects. There is to be some type of phoney consultation on small-scale inshore wind projects. It will be interesting to learn what we will consult about.

I am sure that the officials will make it up as they go along, because they have been making it up since June.

I am sorry that I was an optimist. I am not an expert in renewables. Some people understand it, such as my colleague Paul. He has left the Committee, but I used to enjoy asking Paul, “What’s this all about?”, but he has moved on. Maybe I do not understand it fully yet, but I know this: we have failed. The Northern Ireland Executive have failed and will dress it up with all the achievements and targets that they have hit, but we have failed. For almost eight or nine months, I have sat in a Committee, and it has been like ‘Jackanory’. I share Members’ frustration. I missed the Chairman tonight, but I am sure that he aired his frustration, which I share. I want to be here, to be optimistic, to deliver and to offer vision for the local economy. I believe that the Minister does as well, but we have failed, no matter how we dress it up.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Cochrane-Watson: Certainly, I will, for the final time.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I almost regret standing, a Cheann Comhairle, but I could not stop myself. Would you say that the decision of Concentrix to build new premises on the Lagan at Maysfield is a failure? Would you say that Allstate's decision to build new premises on the Lagan is a failure? Would you say that the innovation lab of Google and PWC's headquarters on the Lagan are a failure? Has there been any ray of light over the last few months? Of course, all those projects have been supported by the Executive.

Mr Cochrane-Watson: I thank the Member, my colleague on the Committee, for his intervention. You are quite right: strategically, we have failed, but the Ulster businessman has delivered, as you highlighted. The Ulster businessman has continued to deliver.

I will finish now. It has been an experience. I wish the renewables sector every success. I hope, genuinely, that whoever is here in the next mandate — I may or may not be here — will not abandon the sector. At this minute in time, there is a lot of frustration, and there is a lot of support, which is needed, to continue our investment in renewables and to move away, as others have said, from fossil fuels and dependence upon them.

Mr Speaker, I have wished you every success. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to make what may be my final contribution in this mandate.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Bell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. This is the last time that I will address the House in this mandate. I wish you every success in the future. I thank you for your role as Speaker and wish you God's richest blessings in whatever you do in the future.

I thank all those who contributed to today's debate. Some have generated heat, and some have generated light, but it has been an interesting debate as we made our way through what is a very complex process. I thank all those who have made renewable energy in Northern Ireland such an astounding success. That has been delivered by people in business, industry, households and workplaces who have a vision for what Northern Ireland renewables can be and who have delivered against that vision. I am very proud to stand here at the end of the mandate to declare that the official Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency figures show that a quarter of our electricity consumption is from renewable electricity.

I think that the Chair might have missed out some of the positive points in his speech, but one that should have been included is that almost 17,000 stations have been accredited since 2005. That has led us to exceed our Programme for Government target of 20% renewable electricity by 2015. I happen to be on the Executive. The five parties collectively came to the agreement after discussions. What the Executive agreed to go forward with after listening to all the parties' contributions was that we should hit a 20% target. Having so successfully exceeded that, I want to thank everybody out there who made that possible. We do get a good deal from the Northern Ireland renewables obligation.

8.00 pm

I would like to thank Patsy McGlone, the Chair of the Committee. I have paid tribute previously in the House, maybe not on tonight's performance but certainly on

others, where he and the Committee have enabled legislation to go through the House in a way that has been constructive, efficient and in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland. If the House or devolved government is to mean anything, it is that we have to deliver more to the people who give us the privilege to come here. Thanks to the Chair and Committee.

I will look to some of the issues that have been raised. I believe that the proposed order will provide the legislative certainty that large-scale onshore wind developers require in order for them to have financial closure. I appreciate the comments that Mr Cochrane-Watson made in relation to the changing position from the Department of Energy and Climate Change. Let me be absolutely clear that, where changes are made by Westminster, I will always examine those changes and, if the facts change, my position will change if there is a better position for all the people of Northern Ireland. As Minister, I do not get the privilege of being only for one sectoral group or from one position. As Minister, I have to act in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland; what I refer to as the paramount interest of all the people of Northern Ireland. When DECC changed its position, as Mr Cochrane-Watson outlined — as did Mr Gordon Dunne — I am proud to say that I also changed mine. My position will always change when the facts change. When the facts change to afford me to deliver something that is better than what was there before for all the people of Northern Ireland, I think that it is only responsible that I would follow in that vein.

I have had a number of meetings. Mr Murphy referred to them in a very constructive contribution. I have, again, spoken to small scale. Others can dismiss the consultation as they see fit. As my father-in-law, Terry, would say, "You are entitled to your opinion no matter how wrong you are". It is a genuine consultation. It is a genuine attempt by this Minister to see what we can do for small scale. That is why I have chosen the route that I have gone down: I believe that it is in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland.

As Mr Dunne, in a very constructive contribution, outlined, we will seek to look to where adjustments can be made that are commensurate with the GB status, because I have to protect the Northern Ireland bill payer. I have to look towards our manufacturing industry and business. Commensurate with what we can do within the parameters of GB, where there are adjustments and I can be helpful, I will seek to make those adjustments. When we go to consultation, it is a genuine, honest consultation to try to take forward what we can do, albeit within the limits that I have laid out, for small scale. It is for a new Minister and Department to take forward that consultation.

I will say the finest word of thanks to those who have been advising me. Members are not privy to the dedicated hours of advice that I received from my officials. That goes from the permanent secretary down to every man and woman who advised me in DETI. We are privileged to have them. They have worked above and beyond the call of duty. They have gone out with me on early mornings to London to be with DECC and have been with me late into the evenings. At every stage, I have been privileged to see a group of officials act at every time in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland to scrutinise what are some very difficult positions, highly complex legalities and to try to ascertain — they have ascertained — through a very complex set of circumstances a path for Northern Ireland

that I believe represents the best interests of Northern Ireland. I put on record, as Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, my thanks for their intelligence, forensic insights and the objectivity of their advice. When we deliver on this process, I believe they can take considerable credit not only for the success of Northern Ireland exceeding the target that we all set out but for the success of Northern Ireland in doing the best and in the paramount interests of the people of Northern Ireland.

I will turn to some of the comments that were made. There has been a difficult process. I think that DECC has made that process difficult. I also think that changing positions, having to deal with verbal consultations and then written consultations has been a very cumbersome and very burdensome process for everybody involved. We have sought at every stage, where we could get the certainty people were asking for and required, to provide that certainty.

Many people will look towards the process and the difficulties that there are. I challenge them to look at the target that was set, to look at the excess of the target that we have made and to look with all of us who, God willing, are seeking to be returned to the House, to the future to see what we can do.

I believe in the renewables industry. I believe that we have certain natural gifts in Northern Ireland, including wind, that we can develop, but we have to do it within a context that is affordable for the householder and for business. To anybody who says, "There is an unlimited pot. You can do what you want with it. Put whatever burden you want on business. You can put up the £50·00 on a household bill for every bill payer in Northern Ireland", I say that you cannot. You must be responsible. Everything must be set in context. I believe that this is the most responsible way forward.

We leave a position where targets in renewable heat and renewables have been exceeded. We leave a Northern Ireland with some 5·9% unemployment, which is well below the average of the European Union and below that in Ireland. We leave a Northern Ireland today that is attracting more foreign direct investment than any other part of the United Kingdom, and we leave a Northern Ireland that has 80% of that foreign direct investment coming in and subsequently reinvesting. We leave a Northern Ireland that, on the basis of our costs, is the most competitive in the UK, with 84% average and some 48% or 49% of the costs of London. We leave a Northern Ireland where companies like Allstate have come, which was referred to by Mr Ó Muilleoir. It employs thousands of our people in Northern Ireland, and it will say on the record, "We came, Jonathan, for your costs, but we stayed for your people because the men and women of Northern Ireland are some of the most loyal people, and there is such a small attrition rate that they are highly attractive and highly sought after".

I agree with Mr Cochrane-Watson that it is the working people of Northern Ireland — I might differ and say that it is the working men and the working women — who have made Northern Ireland such a huge success and who can take credit for the fact that we have a very competitive rate of unemployment, more foreign direct investment and a record number of jobs achieved by a highly successful Northern Ireland and for the fact that we go in with the prospect of offering business for the future, from 1 April 2018, the most competitive rate of corporation tax in western Europe.

Mr Speaker, I have thanked you, and I seek your indulgence to thank one other Member whom I have been privileged to know from my Strangford constituency. That is Kieran McCarthy, who will also be retiring from the House. In all the years I have known Kieran — I have known him for well over a decade — I have found him to be a gentleman of the highest Christian principles and integrity. He has been one of the hardest workers that I have been privileged to meet. He has been genuine in everything that he has sought to do. We have disagreed on many occasions, but I respect the fact that we have always disagreed on points of principle and differences in politics, and that his aim has always been to deliver, not just for our constituents in Strangford but for all the people of Northern Ireland. I wish Kieran God's richest blessings into the future. When people say to me, "There are no Christian gentlemen in politics," I tend to answer with two words: Kieran McCarthy.

On the day that is in it, I also say that, although I have recorded many of the successes, it has been a tragic day for Northern Ireland. Tonight, a father has been taken from his children. That is a person who put on the uniform of the Prison Service and served everybody in Northern Ireland without fear or favour. We must remember that, when people put on those uniforms, they serve all of us, and we are deeply indebted to their bravery and their heroism. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, and also with the Justice Minister and everybody in our justice system and Police Service who seek to bring the murdering cowards responsible to the courts in Northern Ireland.

I believe that the proposed order will provide the legislative certainty that large-scale onshore wind developers require to secure that financial close, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

8.15 pm

Private Members' Business

Licensing Bill: Final Stage

Mrs Cochrane: I beg to move

That the Licensing Bill [NIA 69/11-16] do now pass.

At the outset, as a representative for East Belfast —

Mr Speaker: Could you please speak into the microphone because we are having problems hearing you here?

Mrs Cochrane: I would like to express my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the prison officer who, we heard, tragically died today. As we complete this Assembly term, it is clear that there is still so much to be done to stamp out dissident republicanism. I know that my colleague the Justice Minister will say more about that after this item of business.

The legislation regulating the sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor is in the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. There has been very little change to that legislation over the past 19 years. However, the hospitality industry has seen considerable change in consumer behaviour and demand. Furthermore, the redevelopment of our major sports stadia to become state-of-the-art facilities was not anticipated when the Licensing Order 1996 was introduced.

A significant sum of public money has been invested in upgrading those stadia. They have been, or are being, developed in such a way that means they are versatile in their use and will be fully equipped to host sporting, education, business, tourism and leisure events. As the law stands, however, an application for a liquor licence cannot be made for such premises.

This Licensing Bill will create a new type of liquor licence specifically for our three major outdoor stadia. The sale of alcohol must be ancillary to the normal business carried out on the premises, and that means that an outdoor stadium would not be able to sell or have the consumption of alcohol when it is not in use for an event, sporting or otherwise.

As an additional safeguard, a court is going to be given the power to attach any conditions it considers appropriate to the licence. That would, for example, allow the court to respond to any concerns about the sale of alcohol at certain types of events, particularly those aimed at a young audience. This court could use that power when granting or renewing such a licence or at any time during the life of the licence.

That safeguard was made explicitly clear by Mr Allister's amendment at Further Consideration Stage, which calls for a court to consider specific conditions for under-18 events. Such a condition should aim to protect young people but, at the same time, allow for flexibility based on the specific design of the stadium and how it is being run operationally. When the Schools' Cup final is being held at Kingspan, for example, the sales points under the stands are not in use, but the corporate areas can still operate. I see this as being the type of good practice that a court might endorse on a condition on a licence. I know that the PSNI, which is a statutory consultee for a licensing application, already carries out good work in the planning of stadium events, and I hope that this constructive relationship will continue so that alcohol can be sold in a controlled but family-friendly manner.

Back in October, when I had my first meeting with secretariat staff on introducing this legislation, I think that I was told that I was bonkers and that there was no chance of progressing a private Member's Bill in that time. Those of you who know me will know that, if I am given a challenge, I will find a way to overcome it. Even the person who built the ramp that I tripped over at new year, which resulted in my breaking my arm in two places, did not manage to stop me from getting the legislation through. I was clear in my mind how I wanted to amend the 1996 Order, so my consultation was very focused and clearly defined. Indeed, the Bill before us today has changed only very slightly from its initial draft. Given that I drafted the Bill myself, I think that it is not bad going to have required only a few technical amendments to tidy it up. Given the volume of Executive legislation in the final few months of the mandate, the Bill Office was quite happy that that was the case. I thank that office for its assistance when I needed advice regarding timings, groupings and some wording.

I believe that, against the odds, the Licensing Bill has reached Final Stage today due to my cooperative working with the current and former Minister for Social Development, the sporting bodies, residents, the PSNI and others with an interest in licensing. I put on record a special thanks to the social policy unit team in the Department for Social Development, which has had to put up with my thinking through every eventuality of each clause or potential condition on a stadium licence and for it always being just a phone call away for me to bounce ideas off. My thanks also go to the Chair of the Committee for Social Development, the Committee and the Committee staff. They had a very heavy workload but made sure that they made the time to engage with me and to complete the report. I formally presented to the Committee three times, once after no sleep and wearing the same clothes as the previous day after pulling an all-nighter here, but these things happen when you give yourself tight timescales and are working single-handedly to achieve something. I have learned the lesson that I am now 40 and no longer able to do the things that I did when I was 20, because it took me about a week to recover.

I also take this opportunity to thank my staff members, Matthew McKibbin and Meadhbh Keating Fitzpatrick. They not only met my demands for licensing facts at any time of the day or night but ensured that I did not drop the ball on all the other issues that I was working on in my constituency.

If I may, Mr Speaker, I want to mention one other thing that gave me some added focus as the Bill progressed. Many of you will know that, just as I was launching my consultation, I got the news that Dad was seriously ill. I spent most of the autumn months in the Ulster and Mater Hospitals, often taking calls between visiting hours and drafting parts of the Bill in the relatives' room whilst waiting to hear whether Dad was safely out of surgery. As I progressed through the various stages of the Bill, he too has progressed, and I am delighted that he and my mum are here tonight. I hope that the Bill passes its Final Stage and that, when it receives Royal Assent, he will have finished his chemo and that, next season, he will be able to enjoy a pint with me at a sporting fixture in one of our major stadia. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I ask Members to support the Final Stage of the Licensing Bill.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Ms P Bradley: I am delighted to support Mrs Cochrane and the Licensing Bill. I have known Judith since I arrived here in 2011, and I know her to be extremely studious. She dots every i and crosses every t. When she brought her Bill forward to us in Committee, I knew that it would be absolutely no different. This is the first time that I have spoken on the Bill because, on the occasions that it was in the Chamber, my colleagues spoke because I had other things on. I am delighted to be able to speak on it at Final Stage.

I have to say, Judith, that you worked extremely hard to get this through Committee under extreme time pressures and in extreme family circumstances, which we certainly understand. When you came to us, you went into full detail, listened to all the consultees and took everything on board from the PSNI, the sports clubs, the residents — to absolutely every witness who gave evidence to us in Committee. Through all of that, you always came up with a solution, where possible, and you need to be commended for that. You have worked extremely hard on the Bill, and it is most definitely required. We would, of course, have liked it to be a little broader, but, sadly, that was not to be. I will not even go into the licensing laws in Northern Ireland; I will save that for another day, hopefully when some of us are back here in May. I welcome the Bill today. I know the hard work that has been put into it, and I absolutely commend you for that.

On a personal note, I will miss you greatly. You have been a great friend to me since I arrived here in 2011. We sat on the Assembly Commission together, along with the Speaker, and you have always been there to defend what you believed was right. Not a lot of people see what happens in our Commission meetings, which is probably just as well at times. *[Laughter.]* You were a strong force on that as well, so I want to say thank you for that and for being there for me when I needed you. I wish you every success in whatever endeavours you have ahead of you.

Just in passing, I also want to thank you, Mr Speaker. I know that I thanked you umpteen times last week during International Women's Week for the wonderful work that you did. However, as a Commission member, I want to thank you for being so fair and for listening to us at times when I am sure that you felt like pulling your hair out, but you were extremely fair. You have been a very fair Speaker, and it has been a pleasure to work under you as well.

In finishing, I want to pick up on Judith's first point and pass my condolences on to that family. As someone who wore the uniform of the RUC for 10 years, I remember full well just how hard it was during the Troubles for my family, not only my children but my parents. I remember the times when I was under threat and all the times when it was just so difficult to live a normal life. I know that it will be discussed later, but I just wanted to put on record that I am thinking of them. I hope that we are not going back to those days again. We have a wonderful country here, we are going forward, and so many Members do not want us to go back.

Thank you for your indulgence, Mr Speaker. Thank you, Judith, and all the very best.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mrs D Kelly: I also congratulate Mrs Cochrane at Final Stage of the Licensing Bill. We had hoped to amend other

licensing laws to drag them into the 21st century, but, no doubt, a future Assembly will look at them, given the loss to the coffers and their impact on the tourism trade.

It is fair to say that the Social Development Committee and, indeed, the House cooperated all along the way with Mrs Cochrane to ensure that the Bill would be concluded before the end of the mandate. It is an example of using common sense and a bit of a collaboration to provide what I hope is in the best interests of the people, particularly the service users of the stadia.

I, too, will use this opportunity to commend you, Mr Speaker, for your service. I wish you and your family every health and happiness in your retirement. Indeed, to all Members of the Assembly who have chosen not to stand again, I wish you well, particularly my good friends Alban Maginness and John Dallat, who will be sorely missed as contributors not only in the Chamber but to our Assembly parliamentary meetings.

I also wish Trevor, the Director General, well. He and I have travelled many roads together, from Craigavon council to the Policing Board to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and I wish him well in whatever he chooses to do in the future. I also hope that he relays my thanks to all the staff throughout the Building for all their efforts to make our jobs easier, because politics is a very tough game, and it helps when people are courteous, respectful, and you can rely on them to play their part in enabling you to fulfil your responsibilities as a Member of the Assembly.

8.30 pm

So, Mr Speaker, thank you very much indeed, and, Mrs Cochrane, I certainly wish you well in your future.

Mr Beggs: I declare an interest as a non-playing member of Larne Rugby Football Club, although I am not sure that there are any plans to build a regional stadium there — *[Laughter.]* — so I do not think that this legislation will apply to it.

Like others, I pay tribute to Judith Cochrane for the work that she has carried out in taking forward a private Member's Bill. I am aware of the considerable work involved, so how she managed to condense it into such a short period amazes me, so well done for that.

There are clearly gaps in our licensing laws in Northern Ireland. In 2012, there was a consultation by the Department for Social Development, and, in 2014, there was an announcement that the law would be changed, but that did not happen. What we see here is a private Member spotting that there is a need for change and driving it herself, so well done for that. Of course, other aspects remain to be changed. We are now in a different environment from that of 20 years ago, when the original rules were written in the 1996 Order. Other work requires to be done, and that will fall to the next Assembly.

We have a burgeoning tourism and hospitality industry, and at least this private Member's Bill will facilitate those who come to Northern Ireland to enjoy our major sports venues: what we now have at Ravenhill or Kingspan Stadium, the new Windsor Park that is emerging, and, potentially, the new Casement Park, when planning issues are eventually addressed and development occurs.

It is clear that the customer, the spectator of sport today, has demands different from those of spectators in the past. People expect a comfortable environment, hospitality and a customer experience: food, perhaps a glass of wine or a

pint of beer. This legislation fills that void, because there was not legislation specifically covering outdoor stadia. In 2004, when the new Odyssey Arena was built — it is now the SSE Arena — specific legislation was brought in to deal with indoor arenas. This private Member's Bill does something similar for the emerging outdoor stadia. We have to thank Judith Cochrane for driving that forward and for getting this Bill, after considerable effort, to Final Stage. We have listened to evidence at Committee from a range of sources and have come up with a proportionate and balanced Bill. I wish to indicate my continued support, and the support of the Ulster Unionist Party, for it.

I wish Judith well in her future career. I also offer my best wishes to the Speaker and to the Deputy Speaker, John Dallat, who are now standing down as Assembly Members. I wish you both well in your retirement.

Mr Ross: I, too, want to add my name to the list of those who have already congratulated the Member on the passage of her Bill. As others have said, we have had a rush of legislation through the Chamber in the last number of weeks. Sadly, sometimes people outside the House and, increasingly, in the House, judge the merits of this place on how many Bills we pass. I do not think that that is necessarily how we should judge our output. We should judge our output on the quality of the Bills and whether we are actually solving problems.

I remember the meeting of the all-party group on rugby at Kingspan Stadium after the summer break. There had been a court case that summer as well, the outcome of which had unintended consequences for our regional stadia, particularly the Kingspan Stadium, because of its different licensing arrangements and fewer regulations around it than UEFA would impose on Windsor Park. I remember that, at that meeting, saying that we need assistance from the Assembly on the licensing laws. At the time, I suggested, as chair of the all-party group, that we should write to the Minister to see what we could get done, but it was a very tight timescale.

At that meeting, Mrs Cochrane confidently declared, "Oh no, I can solve this; I will bring a private Member's Bill forward." I am not one to ever question Mrs Cochrane's ability — I am quite sure that you would do so at your peril — but even the most optimistic people at the meeting questioned whether she would be able to get it through in the very tight timescale. The fact that we are here at Final Stage, as the penultimate act of this mandate, shows the determination and ability of Mrs Cochrane to get the Bill through. Indeed, it also shows her ability to work with other individuals to make sure that it happened. She did that with some of the residents around Ravenhill whom, I know, were at times quite concerned about what the Bill would mean — she should be commended for the consultation that she carried out — and with officials in DSD to make sure that they assisted her in making the Bill a reality. Fans of Ulster Rugby and other sports for which the Bill will have implications will certainly be very grateful.

I certainly welcome the fact that, from an all-party group on rugby perspective, she has been standing up for the Ulstermen. I am, however, disappointed that she is standing down from the Assembly. I genuinely mean that. She has brought a very sensible contribution to an Assembly that sometimes lacks sensible voices. She has made a really positive contribution in her term of office here, and I am disappointed that she is standing down. I am quite sure

that many of us will still have informal meetings at the Kingspan Stadium before games on Friday evenings, but I am disappointed that she is standing down, and I wish her every success in whatever she chooses to do afterwards.

I will certainly support the Final Stage of the Bill.

Mr McCallister: Like colleagues, I welcome the Final Stage of the Licensing Bill. Following on from Mr Ross, it is a shame that Mrs Cochrane is standing down because we could desperately do with her back here to continue the reform of our licensing laws, although that is looking like quite a big job for anybody to take on.

When Mrs Cochrane first mentioned the crazy idea, to me, that she was going to do this, I tried to remind her that the mandate ended in March of the coming year. She identified a problem that needed to be sorted, drafted the legislation, worked with the Committee, worked with the Minister and the Department, and met all the obligations here and any obstacle that was thrown in the way, with mere things like needing to set Standing Orders aside for the day. She did whatever needed to be done and nothing seemed to be too much trouble or too difficult for her to overcome.

It was very much to her credit that she was able to work and find a solution to an issue that, as we go forward, will allow us to look at different things. Mr Beggs talked about the Kingspan Stadium, Windsor Park and possibly Casement. If we are serious in years to come about developing a product that says that we are in a place that means that we should be able to host the Rugby World Cup, all the other obstacles in our licensing laws should be dealt with. I really commend Mrs Cochrane for doing that.

I have to say also that she did so at a difficult personal time when her dad was so ill. I am delighted that he and Judith's family are here, because that is important. Sometimes, one of the downsides of being in politics is that social media exposes all our lives to some really quite harsh and unkind things. I certainly am delighted that things have improved in that regard, not only with getting the Bill passed but with your father's health improving. That is something that we are all thankful and delighted for.

This is an important piece of legislation. It shows what the Assembly and individual Members can achieve when there is the will and drive of a Back-Bencher to solve a problem and work with others to do that and to overcome those obstacles. That is why it is important.

Like Mr Ross, I am sad that Judith Cochrane will be leaving the Assembly, and I certainly wish her every blessing and every good wish in whatever she decides to do.

I am sure that those informal meetings may well continue over a pint at an Ulster Rugby game, although, I am sure, not with DUP members [*Laughter.*] They will be drinking Coca-Cola. I am sure those meetings will continue.

Given the skills and talents that Mrs Cochrane possesses, I am sure that she has a very encouraging career ahead of her. The best days are very much ahead. I wish her and her family well and wish her every success and good wish. I offer her huge congratulations. I know the work it takes to get a private Member's Bill passed. She said to me a few months ago that I was not getting my private Member's Bill passed, so she does not know everything.

Mr Speaker: I call Mrs Judith Cochrane — I am sure you have been waiting for this moment — to conclude the Final Stage.

Mrs Cochrane: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank all the Members for their engagement tonight. If they could all write me a job reference, that would be really helpful. If all that is true, I should be very employable. I also thank everybody else who has engaged with me during the stages of my Licensing Bill. It has been a challenge, but it is one that I believe has been worthwhile and has delivered a positive outcome. Whilst I would like it to have gone further as well and to have dealt with a number of other licensing issues, time was not on my side, so it had to remain very focused on our stadia, especially with the bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup coming up.

This is the last time I will speak in the House. I do so with mixed emotions. I trust that you, Mr Speaker, will allow me a little latitude as I make some closing remarks. First, I thank you for your leadership. It has been a pleasure to work with you from my days on the Finance Committee with you at the start of my term and more recently on the Assembly Commission. You have done so much to encourage women in politics, and my decision to step down is not a reflection of that valuable work. I wish you well in your retirement. I know that we celebrate our birthdays a couple of days apart. On our next milestone birthdays in another 10 years, who knows where we will be?

I also want to mention my colleagues Kieran and Anna. I hope they are looking forward to a well-earned rest. I know that I am certainly looking forward to spending some more time with my family, including my girls — Emma Rose and Jessica. Who knows? I might even manage to deliver on the goal of having a clean, tidy house, although I cannot imagine that Jonny will let me take over the role of cooking again just yet.

When I was elected to the Assembly back in 2011, I came here with the hope that I could make a difference, that my work ethic would not change and that I would get things done. I hope that the people of East Belfast have been satisfied with my work record; it has certainly been a privilege to serve them. I was brought up to be a doer and to get on with people and to realise that, although many of us have differing views on issues, as individuals we can still work together to get things done. I have built strong working relationships with people from every party represented in the Chamber tonight; indeed, I would say that I have made firm friends. I believe that it is through those relationships that I have been able to garner support for the progression of my Bill against the odds. I hope that the new Assembly will see more doers who are willing to work with others and whose focus is on finding solutions and making a difference. That is what the people of Northern Ireland deserve. Remember that the world is changed by your example, not your opinion.

In closing, I thank the House for its consideration of the Bill from the preliminary stages until today, where there seems to be unanimous support. I hope that my work on the issue has brought to the fore the key limitations of the 1996 Order and how it can often be seen to hold us back in tourism and other events. It is incumbent on the next Assembly to move forward with a full review of liquor licensing that is fit for a modern Northern Ireland. I commend the Licensing Bill to the House. *[Applause.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Licensing Bill [NIA 69/11-16] do now pass.

8.45 pm

Ministerial Statement

Death in Service of Prison Officer Adrian Ismay

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Mr Speaker, I start by thanking you for agreeing to allow me to make the statement at short notice. It is with the deepest sorrow that I speak to Members today following the death of serving prison officer, Adrian Ismay. I know that I speak for everyone in the Assembly when I say that our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, his daughters and the wider family circle, as well as his colleagues and friends.

Adrian's death has come as a great shock to all of us. He was a husband, father and grandfather, and it is in his family home that the pain of the loss will be felt most. He was also hugely respected by his friends and colleagues in the Northern Ireland Prison Service, where he gave over 28 years' service. In addition to his dedicated work as a prison officer, Adrian was actively involved in the community as a trainer in search and rescue and first aid. A remarkable example of his dedication to the Prison Service was shown when he attended a passing-out ceremony for new recruits last Friday, just one week after he had been attacked.

That courage could not be more different from the cowardice of those responsible for planting a bomb under his van in the darkness of night. Whilst the police and other agencies are working to establish the exact cause of Adrian's death, his bravery is in stark contrast to those who carried out this appalling attack. Those behind this callous attack once again showed an utter disregard for human life, not only for the life of someone who served the community but for the lives of his family and others living in the area. I know that I speak for all Members when I condemn the actions of those responsible for this heinous attack and say that I fully support the police in their investigation.

Those involved in carrying out this misguided attack and those who planned it should see the futility of their actions. They go against the democratic principles that the vast majority of people in this society support. I know that the police are looking for every piece of evidence to bring the perpetrators to justice, and I ask anyone with information to contact the police.

Adrian Ismay served the entire community. Whoever was behind this has nothing to offer anyone in Northern Ireland. Today, the Assembly and the justice family stand side by side, united in our sympathy for Adrian's family and in solidarity against those who want to drag this community back.

Mr Speaker: I say this for guidance, because we have a significant list. Obviously, Members can ask a question of the Minister on the statement. If, in fact, they want to express their own wishes and it is not a question, that might facilitate me to bring more Members into the discussion. However, people are entitled to ask a question of the Minister if they so wish.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): This is not the way in which any of us would have wanted to end the Assembly mandate. The targeting of Adrian Ismay at the beginning of this month

demonstrates that, despite the progress that has been made in Northern Ireland over the past decade, there are still those in our society who will target a husband and father simply because of the uniform that he wears to work. There is nothing noble or brave about skulking around in the shadows and bringing death and destruction to communities that just want to get on with their lives. The only thing that those responsible for targeting Mr Ismay will achieve is to unite the law-abiding community in its determination and resolve to stand up to terrorism and work for a brighter future, rather than one full of the darkness of the past. My thoughts this evening are with the Ismay family and Adrian's colleagues across the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Reports came out of Maghaberry prison this afternoon that dissident republicans were celebrating and smoking cigars at the news that broke this morning. Not only will that appal most normal people, but it reflects the fact that prison officers work in extremely difficult circumstances, both in the prison and outside it. Can the Minister assure us that he will continue to work with the Prison Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to ensure that there is adequate protection for those who wear a uniform to protect the law-abiding citizens of Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: I indicated to the House at Question Time this week that the director general of the Prison Service had asked for a security assessment of the threat against prison officers. I have no doubt that that will be completed as speedily as can be and that the Prison Service, in conjunction with the Police Service, will do all that it can to protect Prison Service staff.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Like the Chair, I think that it is sad that this is the last piece of business for this Assembly. Last week, in a matter of the day, most of us expressed the hope that Adrian Ismay would make a full recovery and extended good wishes to him. Indeed, yesterday, the Minister, in his contribution on the Floor, told us that he had made a full recovery and that, while certainly not back at his work, he was able to attend a passing-out ceremony at Hydebank.

Tonight, it is right and proper that we send our condolences to his family, his circle of friends and his colleagues. It is also appropriate that we send a very clear message to those who carry out these types of incidents, now including an attack in which a person has died, that they have no mandate and little or no support. Does the Minister agree that the best way to send that message is to remain united and firm in our approach to opposing those people?

Mr Ford: I certainly agree that we need united condemnation from the Assembly and a united community response to those who seek to divide us and drag us back.

Mr McKinney: This death is a huge blow to all of us who have stood against those with such murderous intent. My thoughts and the thoughts of all in the SDLP are with Adrian's family and friends at this difficult time. Today, we are reminded once again that, despite our differences, we are one society and one people, united and indivisible in the face of terror. We stand as democrats against such terror. They will not succeed.

I simply ask the Minister to directly convey to Adrian's family and friends our thoughts this evening.

Mr Ford: I expect to see the family during the day tomorrow. I will convey the wishes that are being expressed around the House, which I have no doubt will continue unanimously, when I meet the family.

Mr Kennedy: On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, I join the Minister and the entire House in expressing profound sadness at the death earlier today of prison officer Mr Adrian Ismay. I express sympathy to his wife, his family and his colleagues on his tragic and untimely death.

It is more than a little ironic that the final plenary of the mandate has been overshadowed by events outside the House today. Regardless of the House, the lives of the Ismay family have been changed utterly and for ever. Those responsible for the planting of the under-vehicle device 11 days ago bear a very heavy responsibility for the death of Mr Ismay.

I am mindful that this is an occasion to express our heartfelt sympathy to his wife and family and not to engage in political discourse. However, will the Minister join me in expressing utter contempt for the reported celebrations by dissident republican prisoners in Maghaberry prison following news of the death of prison officer Ismay? Will he agree with me that such actions are entirely despicable?

Mr Ford: I am aware of reports in the media about supposed celebrations in Roe House in Maghaberry. I am not aware of the veracity of those allegations, but I entirely agree with Mr Kennedy that, if there is any truth in them, it is utterly despicable behaviour.

Mr Dickson: I, too, join the Minister in condemning the acts of last week and expressing sympathy to the Ismay family. Does he agree that the vile and pathetic excuses for humanity who carried out this atrocity and, sadly, others have nothing to offer our society and that the Assembly should be seen as standing firm tonight against those individuals?

Mr Ford: I agree entirely with that. I have said before and repeat tonight that it appears that some people are more wedded to some form of struggle than to any possible outcome. They must be condemned from every quarter. The united response in the House is being replicated amongst the vast, overwhelming majority of our people not just in Northern Ireland but across the border and across the water, judging from the responses that I saw this morning. That is the response that we need, and we need that carried through into the practical action of assistance to the police and acknowledgement of the difficult task that the police officers and prison officers of this society carry out.

Mr Douglas: I am a DUP Member for East Belfast, and this man was a neighbour of mine in many ways and lived a few streets away. We are all deeply saddened by the death of prison officer Adrian Ismay and wish to express our sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family. Let us not mince our words: will the Minister support me when I say that this attack on prison officer Ismay was a deplorable and senseless act of terror?

Yesterday in the Senate Chamber, we marked European victims of terrorism remembrance day by hearing from three victims of terror from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain — three victims whose lives had been shattered by bombs and bullets. One of the three speakers at the event was Austin Stack, whose father, Brian, was shot and fatally wounded in Dublin in 1983 by

terrorists while serving as chief prison officer in Portlaoise jail. It was a powerful and moving speech, but the grief and loss were still evident all these years later. Yesterday, I was thinking, "That was in the past. I hope to God that we have put those days behind us". Yet we hear today of this tragic death and of another family facing uncertainty. Does the Minister agree that all of us in the Chamber need to redouble our efforts, through what we say and do, to marginalise and eradicate those who want to bring us back to the past?

Mr Ford: Of course I agree with the sentiments that Mr Douglas expresses. He referred to the murder of Mr Stack some years ago in the Republic. Notably, in recent years, when I have attended the Northern Ireland Prison Service memorial service on the Friday before Remembrance Sunday, there has been a representation of uniformed officers of the Irish Prison Service, wearing poppies with shamrocks to show their solidarity on a cross-border basis. That is the message that needs to go out: unity within Northern Ireland and unity across the island against all those who would seek to divide us. That must be followed by a determination to overcome the divisions that exist and that certain people continue to play on.

Mr A Maginness: There is, indeed, a dark shadow over the Assembly as we prepare for the elections. The attack on Adrian Ismay was not just an attack on a prison officer; it was an attack on the Assembly, it was an attack on the political process and it was an attack on non-violence and peaceful politics. The only response that we as an Assembly can give is to come together in solidarity to support Mr Ismay's family in their terrible and tragic loss. I ask the Minister to convey that to the family.

Mr Ford: I will do so.

Mr Allen: I join Members in expressing my deepest and heartfelt sympathies for Mr Ismay's family, which I ask the Minister to convey to the family. Does the Minister feel that it is appropriate or necessary to make representations to the British Government for additional resources to help the PSNI to apprehend the despicable individuals behind this cowardly attack and to counter any further attacks by these individuals, who have nothing to offer our society?

Mr Ford: I indicate to Mr Allen, as to others, that the issue of appropriate resources for the justice system — in particular, for the work of the Police Service — is kept continually under review, and I have no doubt that it will feature in discussions that I will have with the Secretary of State in the immediate future.

Mr Craig: It is with deep sadness that I rise to speak on one of the last things to be discussed in the House: the death of Adrian Ismay.

Let us not beat about the bush: he was murdered by terrorists in Northern Ireland. We hoped that that had been buried in the past, in the history of not only Northern Ireland but Ireland as a whole.

9.00 pm

Unfortunately, I speak as one who has a little understanding of what that family is going through. The same knock came to my family's door, and it is horrendous. I feel for that family, and my thoughts and prayers are with the family circle at this time. What that family is going through is almost unbearable and unthinkable.

It is a reminder to all of us in the House that we signed up for a peaceful alternative for Northern Ireland and that we need to redouble our efforts to secure that peaceful future. We need to support those in our police force who, unfortunately, have to deal with this daily. It is concerning to hear that six other attempts were thwarted before, unfortunately, these evil people succeeded in this case. Minister, my question to you is this: can you assure the House that you will give the Chief Constable all the resources necessary to try to thwart those who, unfortunately, want to drag us back to the past?

Mr Ford: Members will appreciate that I cannot promise to give "all the resources necessary", in Mr Craig's phraseology, to the Chief Constable. We are bound by various restrictions. In response to Mr Allen, I said that I will look at the issue of resources and appropriate support for the Police Service in discussions with the Secretary of State in the coming weeks.

Mr Craig also made a very significant point, and it is one that we should remember: this was not just an attack on democracy, on the peace process in Northern Ireland and on an individual prison officer and his colleagues; it will also have raised major concerns with those who suffered in the past. We should, perhaps, also remember them tonight as we remember the Ismay family.

Mr Lyttle: I also extend my deepest sympathy to the family of Adrian Ismay. I think of my family at this time, and my heart breaks for Adrian's family. They will be in my most sincere thoughts and prayers. Does the Minister agree that the bravery and courage of Adrian and his colleagues stand in stark contrast to the cowardice of the terrorists behind this heinous attack? May I seek an assurance that he will work to do all that he can to provide Adrian's family and colleagues with all possible support as they stand against violence and for peace and democracy for everyone in our community?

Mr Ford: Support for Prison Service staff and their families in general is being addressed by the director general. I am also well aware of the direct support provided by representatives of the Prison Service Central Benevolent Fund to the Ismay family over the 11 days since the incident occurred, and particularly today. That support needs to be followed through in a response from the community that, first, provides to the Police Service practical information that can help to catch the perpetrators, and, secondly, tells those who wear the uniform of a prison officer or a police officer that they do so on behalf of everyone and are respected for the work that they do by all in society, except the tiny number who carry out deeds like this.

Mr Poots: Like everybody else, we are shocked and saddened by this turn of events. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to the Ismay family. The Prison Service is, pretty much, a family. Prison officers go into a prison, carry out their duties and stick by one another. Mr Ivor Dunne was at the Committee not very long ago — within the last six weeks — highlighting how dangerous the situation was for prison officers. Sadly, Mr Dunne's words have come to pass. I have a question for the Minister. When will the Department, the director general and the head of the Prison Service start listening to the people in the Prison Service? I think that ignoring the views being expressed by those people is highly dangerous. We need to listen to

the intelligence coming from them and to pay attention and respond to them, not pay lip-service to these situations.

Mr Ford: I do not believe that anybody in the leadership of the Prison Service is merely paying lip-service to the concerns that have been expressed. I have already indicated that an updated security assessment has been sought from the director general. Measures have been provided to ensure protection for prison officers and their homes. However, the sad reality is that, in circumstances where a small number of people are seeking to carry out attacks on police and prison officers, whether on or off duty, unless people are entirely vigilant all the time and the community provides the information that is required, we cannot be certain that we will not see similar incidents in the future.

The important thing is that we see a united response carried through into full support for the Police Service in its difficult task of protecting the community in general. At the same time, we should recognise the good work being done by prison staff in the difficult task of changing the culture of prisons for the vast majority of prisoners, while still dealing with the small numbers who pose significant threats, including those posed by their colleagues outside.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Minister and Members. That concludes questions on the statement.

Adjourned at 9.07 pm.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

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Education

Major Capital Projects to be Advanced in Planning

Published at 2.00 pm on Tuesday 15 March 2016

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I should like to make a written statement updating this Assembly on the Schools' Capital Programme and my further capital investment plans for the coming period.

In my previous statements to the house, I set out the challenges faced by a schools' estate, comprising 1,164 schools (96 nursery, 827 primary, 202 post-primary and 39 special) of varying sizes, of differing types and under the control of various Managing Authorities. The estimated capital value of the Education Estate is substantial at just over £3billion.

My Department's strategy for capital investment has been and will remain focussed on supporting the development and delivery of a network of viable and sustainable schools, set firmly in the context of 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools' and shaped by the outworking of the Area Planning process.

Throughout my time in office, I have always ensured that investment plans primarily focus on providing a first class education experience for the pupils, teachers and indeed school communities, to ensure our young people have the type and quality of accommodation required to help them fulfil their potential.

I am conscious that it is incumbent on me to balance the limited capital resources made available to me against the scale of investment needed across, what can only be described as a wide and diverse schools' estate.

While it would be good to be in a position to make a statement that promises investment to all schools in need, I must be realistic and ensure that any school I announce for any form of investment is not only deliverable but will be sustainable into the future.

In the period since June 2012 I have made three major capital announcements of projects to be advanced in planning. These projects total over £500m and to date seven are complete, ten are currently on-site, a further twenty-six are in design with many of these likely to move on-site in the in-coming financial year.

In addition to these major projects, I was pleased to announce 51 project proposals under the Schools' Enhancement Programme (SEP) with an estimated value

of £134million in March 2014. Nine of these projects are complete, seventeen are currently on site and a further eight projects are expected on site before the end of this financial year. I have recently approved a further twelve projects to move to construction and these are expected to be on site early in the new financial year. The remaining seven projects continue to advance in planning.

This represents a substantial pipeline of major and SEP projects and I hope you will agree as we reach the end of this Assembly term, and indeed the end of my time in office as Minister for Education, that this signifies considerable progress in terms of investment in the schools' estate.

Implementing major works in schools is not my only priority in any given year. I have delivered a sizeable programme of much needed minor capital works across the estate. These works have included addressing statutory obligations across the estate in regard to health and safety, fire safety and DDA. They have also dealt with a range of accommodation issues and additional provision. I have also invested substantially in maintenance works across the estate in recent years despite the considerable constraints on the resource budget.

But turning to the substantive purpose of my written statement to the house today, I wish to announce a further tranche of major capital projects to ensure that the pipeline of projects in planning continues to be filled. While the construction work on these projects will not take place for several years, it is important that we continue to plan and complete the design work to ensure that should funding become available for construction the Department is ready and able to take advantage of the opportunity.

I feel it is important in the first instance to set out the process used to select these specific schools for announcement today.

As was the case in my previous announcements in 2012, 2013 and 2014, I have agreed a protocol which has been developed to assess the list of proposed projects. A copy of this protocol has been placed on the Department's website.

The basic underpinning rationale of the protocol is that all projects will be considered within the context of the emerging area plans and confirmed as forming part of the core provision in an area going forward, including confirmation of the size of the school.

The approach was as follows:

- call for project proposals from School Authorities, limited to fifteen each from Controlled and Catholic Maintained and five each from the Integrated and Irish Medium Sectors;

- apply 'gateway' criteria to develop a shortlist of projects to proceed to the scoring stage;
- score each of the shortlisted projects in accordance with the scoring frame set out in the Protocol for Selection of Major Works Projects to Proceed in Planning 2016, which is available to view on the Department's website; and
- consider the prioritised list of projects in the context of the available budget.

Following the application of this process and consideration of the degree to which the future capital budget will be utilised by projects currently in planning, I have decided that a further ten Primary School projects should now be advanced in planning. These are:

- St Vincent de Paul PS, Belfast (Catholic Maintained).
- New Primary School to amalgamate: St Mary's PS, Annalong; St Joseph's PS, Kilkeel; and Moneydarragh PS, Annalong (Catholic Maintained).
- Islandmagee PS – a new Primary School created from the amalgamation of Mullaghduh PS and Kilcoan PS, Islandmagee (Controlled).
- Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, Dungannon (Irish Medium).
- St Peter's PS, Dungannon (Catholic Maintained).
- Gaelscoil Eanna, Newtownabbey (Irish Medium).
- Crawfordsburn PS (Controlled).
- Seaview PS, Belfast (Controlled).
- St Malachy's PS, Armagh (Catholic Maintained).
- King's Park PS, Lurgan (Controlled).

The total capital value of these schools is broadly estimated to be circa £40million.

While this will be welcome news for these schools, there will be others that will be disappointed not to be announced today. I can reassure those schools that not being part of this list will not impact their chances of being selected as part of a future call. I would also encourage these schools to consider making applications to future School Enhancement Programme calls for proposals. While these SEP projects cannot entirely rebuild a school, they have the potential to move more quickly than a major project and with an upper ceiling of £4m can still make a substantial difference to a school in need of capital investment.

In terms of budget, the spend profile associated with the ten recommended projects will be spread over a number of years (as is the case with previous announcements).

While different projects will progress at different speeds, timescales required to complete site searches, technical feasibility studies, business cases, procurement and design processes for the announced projects mean that significant construction spend is unlikely before the 2018/19 financial year.

I would like to conclude by stating that this announcement today is not only good news for those schools to be advanced in planning but it is also good news for the economy. It represents in the order of £40m of capital investment and will be a welcome boost to the construction industry over the coming years as the projects come to fruition.

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Legacy of DCAL

Published at 12.00 noon on Friday 25 March 2016

Ms Ni Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): DCAL is a small Department in terms of staff numbers but has always been big in terms of ambition and more importantly delivery and outcomes. I am proud of what DCAL has achieved in harnessing the value of the culture, arts and leisure sector in making a lasting impact on society here.

Without DCAL we would be living in a very different place. Developments would not have taken place at our Stadiums, the Ulster Museum, the Grand Opera House, the Crescent Arts Centre, the Playhouse Theatre and the Culturlann Ui Chanain Centre in Derry nor would the inspiring new Public Record Office at the Titanic Quarter have been opened.

Without DCAL's support the new Lyric and MAC theatres would not have been developed. Without DCAL our Libraries would not have been protected or have improved facilities at more than a dozen locations.

The work of my Department has also shown off the best we have to offer on a global scale with major successes such as Derry City of Culture, the World Police and Fire Games and our involvement in the Olympics and Paralympics. In addition to these headline achievements, DCAL has delivered much, much more.

No one can doubt what DCAL has delivered since its creation in 1999. Over the past five years alone my Department has invested over £500 million in ensuring the cultural, arts and leisure sectors maximise their potential across a range of areas making a significant contribution to the economy and health and well-being.

Throughout my time as Minister, I have focused DCAL's resources on the Promotion of Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion (PETPSE). This has been a core principle that has underpinned all our work. Where DCAL spends public money the focus has been on how it can benefit those who are most vulnerable in society. For too long sections of the community have expressed feelings of having been shut out from participation and where people are excluded we lose the benefit of their knowledge, their experience and their diversity. I am proud of my Department's achievements across the sector and in reaching out to those who have been marginalised. I would like to give you a flavour of what has been achieved.

Libraries are at the heart of community life across the North providing spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone. Libraries deliver an extensive range of programmes, including cultural and heritage events, early childhood learning programmes, job clubs, adult reading classes, IT classes and a range of activities to support those dealing with mental health issues. We should not underestimate their importance. I have invested significant resources in enhancing libraries' services including new facilities in Kilkeel, Lisnaskea and Moira and in protecting library services in general.

The investment by DCAL in the arts and sporting sectors has also added greatly to addressing inequalities. Many

people feel that they have been failed by society and they can experience exclusion. However frequently they can be engaged and supported through activities they already enjoy – creative, cultural and sporting programmes.

One example of this is the Magherafelt “My Space” project that reaches out to children in care. The programme encourages young people to work with digital animation artists and dramatists, to tell their story in a unique way, and help them address some of the difficulties they will face now and in the future.

DCAL has also worked with the Simon Community to deliver the ‘Without Doors project’ which gives a voice to the homeless of Belfast, using digital art and animation, and has also supported angling outreach programmes. DCAL has additionally taken forward very important work as part of the Executive’s Together : Building a United Community strategy. This has included utilising the power of sport to deliver a Youth Sports Programme in the Lower Falls and Greater Village areas of Belfast as well as funding a wide range of activities making a difference to the lives of vulnerable young people, the homeless and people with disabilities. This is now being rolled out in rural areas with a pilot project in Lisnaskea.

With Belfast City Council we are investing £175,000 in supporting programmes to promote participation in sport, mental health initiatives and opportunities for the long-term unemployed to train as coaches and administrators.

The Public Record Office has been pivotal in ensuring disclosure and openness and that people directly affected by the conflict are able to obtain vital information from inquest records and court files. I know that families, victims and survivors are searching for answers so that they can understand what happened to a loved one and I am pleased to have enabled access to records for over one hundred families over the past two years. It is important that this work continues.

PRONI has also championed digital innovation with the introduction of the electronic catalogue and other online resources widening access particularly to those who cannot visit PRONI in person. This has attracted over 13 million page views to the PRONI website each year. March 2015 also saw the completion of a Digital Repository for PRONI which ensures that records created digitally, by today’s public bodies, can be preserved and widely accessed as public records for future generations.

Our Museums have also played an important role in helping to deliver positive change for people and communities. For example, the Live and Learn project worked with older people who were socially isolated and in need of support. The project supports over 4,000 people each year offering programmes to encourage engagement and improve health and well being. Inland Fisheries Group has delivered programmes with young people, vulnerable adults and individuals with disabilities in promoting the health and well being benefits to be gained from angling.

It is through this work that my Department has not only had an impact on the cultural, arts and leisure sectors, but across the whole community particularly amongst those who are marginalised. I have ensured that despite budget cuts imposed by the British government on the Executive, significant resources have continued to be made available to Arts organisations with almost £73 million invested since 2011.

Arts and Culture have an ability to bring together a wide range of people and in sharing our cultural traditions we make ourselves stronger. An important way to promote diversity is through supporting our indigenous languages and helping communities to express themselves.

I am delighted with the success of the Líoifa campaign and the uptake across the communities. When I launched Líoifa in September 2011, I set a target of encouraging one thousand people to learn Irish by 2015. To date, nearly 18,000 people have signed up, and it continues to grow daily. I am confident that the target of 20,000 sign ups by 2020 will be achieved.

In supporting the sector, I am investing £750,000 in a new Irish language community hub at Aonach Mhaca in Armagh and have committed to an Irish language academy – or GaelAcadamh – in the Gaeltacht Quarter in Belfast. I am also delighted with DCAL’s investment in the new Ulster-Scots Hub and Visitor Centre at Corn Exchange Belfast and the further investment of £4M in Ulster-Scots related projects. The Ulster-Scots Agency has received funding of £9.6m since 2011 and the Ministerial Advisory Group for Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUSA) has received nearly £4m since its creation.

I recently announced my intention to establish an Ulster-Scots Institute. I expect to see the Institute up and running by the end of this calendar year.

In moving this work forward, I have published two strategies to provide frameworks for the development of the Irish language and Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. These languages belong to all of us and we must take this responsibility seriously ensuring both Irish and Ulster Scots flourish in the future. Also, a public consultation has confirmed huge support for an Irish Language Act and this legislation is ready to proceed as soon as the Executive gives its support.

Members will also be aware that I have launched a consultation on a Sign Language Framework with proposals for legislation. I am proud of the work that my Department has undertaken in safeguarding the rights of our Sign Language community and their families.

While the key focus of my department has been on promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion, I have also made a significant investment in improving the infrastructure across the cultural and sporting sectors and in creating jobs. Over the past four years my Department has invested over £113 million in physical facilities. This has included the Kingspan Stadium, Windsor Park and the new facilities at Olympia. My commitment to the redevelopment of Casement Park has never waned and a new planning application will be submitted later this year.

My Department has also continued to lead the way in its commitment to the inclusion of social clauses in contracts, providing new opportunities for the unemployed, apprentices and student placements. The Advisory Group on Architecture and Built Environment has continued to play a key role in working with partners on neighbourhood renewal and community regeneration schemes.

My Department has invested in infrastructure to build on the success of Derry City of Culture. Almost £8 million has been provided in the North West to develop sporting,

community, language and heritage facilities. This is additional to over £12 million invested in 2013.

My Department has also invested in improving other sporting facilities including the North Coast Sports Village, Lisburn Racquets, Colaiste Feirste's Handball Facility in West Belfast, and many local boxing facilities. And in the arts sector, I recently committed over £900,000 to the Seamus Heaney Centre in Bellaghy.

I am very proud of the work that my Department has delivered and that this work will continue with many exciting projects in the pipeline. In particular, I look forward to the completion of a Culture and Arts Strategy following the recent public consultation which has indicated overwhelming support for a strategy. This will be the first overarching, government-led culture and arts strategy for the North.

In developing our infrastructure, the Investment Strategy for 2016 to 2021 projects that capital investment in the cultural and sporting sectors will increase and it is expected that over £300 million will be invested. One of the largest investments will be a £36 million commitment to develop sub-regional stadia for soccer. The next steps should be a similar programme of work for rugby and gaelic football. Initial work is also scheduled to begin on a number of flagship projects, including the second Phase of the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme; the Central Library Project in Belfast and further development of the Ebrington site in Derry.

The next few years will also provide opportunities to build excitement and involvement as major sporting events are held here. Next summer, the Women's Rugby World Cup and the Under 19 Women's European Soccer Championships will be held in the North. These will provide a great opportunity to profile women's sport and increase interest and crucially, participation, in all sports among girls and women. I will also continue to champion the IRFU's bid to bring the Rugby World Cup to Ireland in 2023.

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium has been part of our shared history for hundreds of years and I want to ensure that it has a sustainable and exciting future, building on all its good work to date. I have asked my officials to work closely with the Trustees and staff of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium to develop a range of proposals that will lead to a multi million pound capital investment in Armagh. My vision, shared by the Trustees, is to develop a world class Planetarium excelling in education and outreach alongside a world class Research Institute that will be envied throughout the world.

This will build on the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium's unique heritage to make it a "must visit" destination for local, national and international visitors and students. I see the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium playing a leading role in scientific research and outreach, helping to develop the STEM agenda across our society, being a top visitor attraction in the North and nurturing a new generation of young people excited by the possibilities that science brings.

As Members will be aware, while funding for DCAL was reduced in the Budget I have sought to protect frontline services. I want to continue to ensure that as much of my budget as possible reaches those who are most in need, rather than being spent on needless bureaucracy.

Currently over 80% of my budget is delivered through Arms Length Bodies and the staffing and administration

costs involved are estimated to be in the region of £12 million per annum. The current arrangements create layers of bureaucracy and duplication and Arm Length Bodies also replicate support functions that already exist within my Department, including Human Resources, IT, Accounting and accommodation functions. This is an issue that can be progressed further within the new Department for Communities.

Finally, the Programmes that I have described amount to an agenda for the transformation of our society both socially and economically. The culture, arts and leisure sector is in a good place, however there is much more to be done. It is vital that the level of investment continues in building on this success and in ensuring that resources are targeted at those who are in greatest need.

We owe this to current and future generations.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Child Poverty Strategy

Published on Friday 25 March 2016

Mrs Foster (The First Minister) and Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): We have today laid before the Assembly the Executive's Child Poverty Strategy.

The Child Poverty Act 2010, enacted on 25 March 2010, required us to publish and lay before the Assembly a Child Poverty Strategy by 25 March 2011, prepare and publish annual reports on that strategy and revise the strategy every third year. The Executive's first Child Poverty Strategy, 'Improving Children's Life Chances' was published in March 2011, annual reports have been produced each year and a review of the strategy was initiated in its third year. This Strategy represents the Executive's revised Strategy as required by section 12(3) of the Child Poverty Act.

Tackling poverty and disadvantage is a priority of this Executive. This Strategy sets out an approach and a series of actions focused on improving the economic well-being of families and children's educational attainment, health and environment to improve both their well-being and life chances, reducing both the number of children in poverty and the impact of poverty on children.

Written Answers

This section contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 March 2016

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr McCrossan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the community organisations in West Tyrone that receive funding from their Department.

(AQW 52924/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Seven organisations from West Tyrone received funding from OFMDFM in 2015/16:

- Churchtown Community Association has been allocated £40,000 from the Central Good Relations Fund;
- Youth Sport Omagh has been allocated £10,000 from the Central Good Relations Fund;
- Sollus Cultural Promotions has been allocated £20,000 from the Central Good Relations Fund;
- Strabane Ethnic Community Association has been allocated £10,000 from the Central Good Relations Fund;
- Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group were awarded £44,985 from the Minority Ethnic Development Fund;
- Derg Valley Care received funding from the Social Investment Fund which is expected to be in the region of £215,000; and
- Strabane and District Caring Services received funding from the Social Investment Fund which is expected to be in the region of £300,000.

Mr McCrossan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the Child Poverty Strategy; and (ii) to detail the number of children deemed to be living in child poverty in West Tyrone.

(AQW 53119/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The revised Child Poverty Strategy will be published following Executive agreement. We aim to reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of poverty on them.

The revised strategy will contain actions focused on four high level outcomes; that:

- Families experience economic well being;
- Children in poverty learn and achieve;
- Children in poverty are healthy; and
- Children in poverty live in safe, secure and stable environments.

The revised Strategy will set out not only the actions we plan to take but also a new approach to our efforts to tackling child poverty, which will allow us to better assess performance and focus on the outcomes that we intend to achieve.

HMRC produce estimates on the percentage of children in low income families by Westminster Parliamentary Constituency. This measure provides a broad proxy for relative low-income child poverty as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010, and enables analysis at a local level. The definitive measure of the number of children in low-income families at national level, used for targets in the Child Poverty Act 2010, is contained in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Households Below Average Income (HBAI) publication report The most recent HMRC estimate (2013) of children in low income families in West Tyrone is 24.5%. This compares to a 2012 estimate of 24.8%.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how much their Department has spent to date on the care, maintenance and improvement works, including staff costs, in relation to the former barracks at Ballykelly, since the handover by the Minister of Defence.

(AQW 53673/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Expenditure on the Shackleton Site from 7 October 2011, when the site was transferred from the Ministry of Defence, to 31 December 2015 is detailed in the tables below.

Shackleton Non- Staff Costs	11/12 (from 7/10/11)	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16 (up to 31/12/15)
Total	£345,174	£598,049	£476,236	£423,198	£328,845

Shackleton Staff Costs	11/12 (from 7/10/11)	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16 (up to 31/12/15)
Total	£34,094	£86,217	£87,094	£133,871	£78,438

* rounding applies to tables

Mrs Cochrane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the impact the Social Investment Fund has had on addressing educational under achievement in East Belfast.

(AQO 9501/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund is gathering momentum. More and more areas are beginning to benefit from projects which have commenced and are operational. From the outset SIF was a very ambitious programme, but we remain confident it will continue to bring the anticipated benefits to communities as delivery rolls out over the next couple of years.

The Belfast East Zone prioritised its £8 million allocation across employment, education and capital projects. One of these is the Education and Early Years project which aims to tackle educational underachievement. The associated business case is currently being refined with a view to securing approval. It is anticipated that subject to approval, delivery of this project will help address this key issue and impact positively on those who benefit in the Belfast East zone.

Mr Givan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the delivery of Social Investment Fund projects.

(AQO 9504/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund (SIF) was a very ambitious programme. We remain confident it will continue to bring the anticipated benefits to communities as delivery rolls out over the next couple of years.

The Fund is at the heart of the Executive's Delivering Social Change Framework making life changing differences to people and communities facing disadvantage. It is gaining momentum with £4million spent to date; 25 projects worth £37 million have commenced; 10 projects are currently operational and there is a steady pipeline of others to follow. We expect to have the full £80 million committed by the end of summer 2016.

Across all nine Zones SIF is making substantial capital investment in projects which will enhance community services and dereliction. Not all capital builds are a single discrete building some are widely geographically spread as they contain numerous smaller refurbishments or new builds. To date 15 capital projects have design teams appointed; two will complete construction by 31 March 2016; and one is operational.

It has taken time to get projects through the procurement pipeline, often due to their complexity; our desire to preserve the integrity of communities' original visions; and the need to deliver the maximum possible impact. However we will see capital expenditure start to ramp up this year and next year as major projects such as Derry/Londonderry's Invest in Play and Belfast North's Capital Cluster projects commence construction.

There has also been a substantial investment in revenue projects – nine are operational with over 600 participants benefitting from SIF early intervention, employment and childcare programmes. They were designed by communities to be delivered over two or three year periods so we expect participant numbers and associated expenditure to ramp up significantly as delivery continues.

Expenditure will therefore match the delivery periods of both capital and revenue projects and we anticipate it will rise to £7 million by the end of March 2016. A substantial increase is then anticipated in 2016/17 as projects really get started.

Mrs Dobson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why responsibility for the Social Investment Fund will not be transferred to the new Department of Communities.

(AQO 9507/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Responsibility for the Social Investment Fund (SIF) will remain within Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister as it is a time bound programme which is currently at an advanced stage and making good progress. It is also a key lever of Delivering Social Change which is remaining within Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

An outcomes based accountability approach to evaluation has been adopted from the beginning of SIF and is providing valuable data which will inform and shape both the Executive's Delivering Social Change agenda and the next Programme for Government.

Mr Hussey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a breakdown of the costs associated with the management of the Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation since the decision to no longer support the development of this site in August 2013. (AQW 53782/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation Board is primarily responsible for governance and oversight of the Maze/Long Kesh Site.

Board costs from August 2013 to 31 January 2016 are £199k.

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding their Department has sourced in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. (AQW 53843/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: For the financial years 2005/06 to 2014/15 OFMDFM has sourced European Union (EU) funding against expenditure as detailed in Table 1:

Table 1: EU Funding & Match Funding 2005/06 - 2014/15

Financial year	75% EU Funding £'000	25% Match Funding £'000	Total EU expenditure £'000
2005/06	4,135	1,377	5,512
2006/07	4,521	1,507	6,028
2007/08	2,298	766	3,064
2008/09	4,258	1,419	5,677
2009/10	8,038	2,679	10,717
2010/11	17,822	5,940	23,762
2011/12	14,629	4,876	19,505
2012/13	14,306	4,769	19,075
2013/14	14,280	4,761	19,041
2014/15	11,346	3,783	15,129

For the financial years 2007/08 to 2014/15 the EU funding was expended over Victims and Good Relations programmes as detailed in Table 2:

Table 2: Breakdown of EU spend 2007/08 - 2014/15

Financial year	Victims £'000	Good Relations £'000	Total EU expenditure £'000
2007/08	139	2,925	3,064
2008/09	907	4,770	5,677
2009/10	3,584	7,133	10,717
2010/11	5,309	18,453	23,762
2011/12	3,331	16,174	19,505
2012/13	3,242	15,833	19,075
2013/14	3,249	15,792	19,041
2014/15	3,351	11,778	15,129

No information is held centrally on the financial accounting system for the breakdown of EU expenditure for financial years 2005/06 and 2006/07, as a new Accounts system was introduced in 2007.

Mr Hussey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the preliminary site survey and outline condition report of St Lucia Barracks that they commissioned from CPD has now been completed; and if the report will be made available to the public. (AQW 53851/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The St Lucia condition survey report has been completed. It is a preliminary report and we have no plans to publish it at this time.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail all the community and voluntary groups in East Londonderry that received funding from their Department since 2011, including how much was received.

(AQW 53903/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: A list of community and voluntary groups in East Londonderry that have received funding from OFMDFM since 2011, including how much was awarded, is detailed in the table below.

Year of Funding	Funding Stream	Total Funding Awarded (£)	Group Funded
2013/14	Equality, Human Rights, Active Ageing and Disability Unit	£13,919.12	Big Telly Theatre Company
2014/15	Social Investment Fund	£462,000.00	Coleraine Rural and Urban Network
2014/15	Social Investment Fund	£17,161.00	Strabane and District Caring Services for Work Ready West across all of Western SIF Zone – a 3 year project valued at £2.2 million
2014/15	Social Investment Fund	£5,000.00	Derg Valley Care for SATCHEL across all of Western SIF Zone – a 3 year project valued at £1.3 million
2015/16	Social Investment Fund	£434,346.00	Strabane and District Caring Services for Work Ready West across all of Western SIF Zone – a 3 year project valued at £2.2 million
2015/16	Social Investment Fund	£321,363.00	Derg Valley Care for SATCHEL across all of Western SIF Zone – a 3 year project valued at £1.3 million
2015/16	Social Investment Fund	£261,229.37	Coleraine Rural and Urban Network for Building to Employment Through Education across all of Northern SIF Zone – a 3 year project valued at £3.1million.
2015/16	Summer Camps Pilot Programme	£7,707.07	Education Authority Youth Service Western Region
2015/16	Summer Camps Pilot Programme	£5,494.61	Greysteel Community Enterprise
2015/16	Summer Camps Pilot Programme	£5,976.30	Coleraine Area Youth Office
2015/16	Summer Camps Pilot Programme	£19,287.20	Roe Valley Residents Association
2015/16	Summer Camps Pilot Programme	£9,680.00	Camp Shamrock

Regarding the funding paid to the Big Telly Theatre Company in 2013/14, £11,611.22 was paid out in 2013/14 and the remainder of £2,307.90 was paid in 2015/16; however, as it was paid with a letter of variance, the total amount of £13,919.12 is attributable to the 2013/14 year.

With regards to the Summer Camps Pilot Programme, the costs above represent what has been awarded, rather than actual spend to date. It should be noted that some projects are still ongoing, and not all funding awarded has yet been claimed. Additionally, Summer Camps funding is awarded by the Education Authority, which administers the programme on behalf of OFMDFM.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the extent to which the Programme for Government 11-15 commitment to reduce child poverty has been achieved.

(AQW 53908/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: In the Programme for Government, the Executive made a commitment to fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act 2010. The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires the Executive to publish a Child Poverty Strategy, prepare and publish annual reports on the Strategy and to formally review the Strategy every third year. The 2011-14 Child Poverty Strategy was published in March 2011, to date three Annual Reports have been published and we are currently refreshing data for the imminent publication of a further report. A review of progress was completed in 2014 in consultation with departments. A revised Child Poverty Strategy has been developed, which, following Executive agreement, will be published shortly.

In addition, the Delivering Social Change (DSC) Delivery Framework was established in 2012 and sought to co-ordinate key actions across Government departments to take forward work on priority social policy areas. Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes were initiated in to improve literacy and numeracy levels, offer increased family support and to support job creation within local communities, all of which were identified as being key priorities. It is already evident that each programme has reached a significant number of people (based on the latest available figures reporting up to June 2015):

- Over 3,300 families signposted to a range of services through Family Support Hubs;
- 306 primary school children supported by Nurture Units;
- 44 test traders benefitted from the services of Social Enterprise Hubs;
- Over 16,000 primary and post primary children received additional Maths and English support through the Literacy and Numeracy Programme;
- 720 families participated in the Community Family Support Programme;
- Over 650 families supported through Parenting Support Programmes ;and
- Over 300 health professionals developed their skills for delivering programmes (improving infant mental health and reducing childhood behavioural problems).

In addition the £80 million Social Investment Fund aims to deliver social change in the 9 Social Investment zones across Northern Ireland by supporting investment to tackle issues associated with poverty and deprivation.

In all this work we have focused strategically on improving outcomes across a range of poverty and deprivation measures including health, education and developing the economy to improve the fortunes of those in poverty.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why there was a 65 per cent overspend of the resources originally allocated for the Support for Equality, Human Rights and Community Relations, as revealed in the Spring Supplementary Estimates 2015-16.

(AQW 53962/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: There was no overspend in relation to Support for Equality, Human Rights and Community Relations in 2015-16.

The increase in resources specified in the Spring Supplementary Estimate (SSE) 2015/16 for this function relates to internal realignments of budgets within the Departments' Opening Budget allocation in the Main Estimate, actioned through in-year monitoring rounds.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why there was a 21 per cent overspend of the resources originally allocated for the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation, as revealed in the Spring Supplementary Estimates 2015-16.

(AQW 53963/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation did not overspend against its 2015/16 budget.

The difference between the Main Estimates and the Spring Supplementary Estimates does not represent an overspend. These figures relate to the Grant-in-Aid (cash) for the Corporation.

The Corporation is currently on track to remain within its allocated budget for 2015/16.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the number of families in East Londonderry that have benefited from the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme; and (ii) when the next round of awards will be open for application.

(AQW 54048/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Since its launch in 2014, the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme has awarded funding to five settings in the East Londonderry constituency area. This support has created or sustained 120 school age childcare places.

It is likely that the majority of these places will be used by families living in the East Londonderry constituency. However, some of the 120 places will probably be used by families living outside the constituency just as some families living in the constituency may use SAC Grant Scheme supported childcare services located elsewhere.

A third call for applications to the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme closed on 29 January 2016; all applications received are currently being assessed. The full, final Childcare Strategy is currently being finalised. When launched later this year, we expect it to offer further funding opportunities for current and prospective childcare providers.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the final business case for the relocation of her departmental headquarters to Ballykelly.

(AQW 54145/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The full business case for the relocation of my departmental headquarters to Ballykelly was approved on 24th February 2016.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department has taken, or proposes to take, to acquire the designation of Comber potatoes under the protected designation of origin legislation.

(AQW 54594/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: I am keen to promote our local produce whenever possible and as a matter of routine my Department regularly provides advice and guidance to interested parties regarding the potential for registration of new products for the EU Protected Food Names scheme.

Protected Food Names legislation came into force in 1993 and provides a system for the protection of food names on a geographical or traditional recipe basis. The scheme highlights regional and traditional foods whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed. Under this system a named food or drink registered at a European level will be given legal protection against imitation throughout the EU.

With support from my Department, New Season Comber Potatoes/Comber Earlies were granted a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status under the Protected Food Names legislation in February 2012.

Currently my Department has no plans to take forward an application for a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status for the Comber potato.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many Single Farm Payments have been made in South Down in each of the last three years; and to detail the total value of Single Farm Payments in South Down in each year.

(AQW 54603/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of Single Farm Payments (SFP) made in South Down in each of the last three years and the total value of SFP paid is detailed in the table below in euro:-

Year	Number of SFP payments for South Down	Value of SFP payments for South Down (€)
2012	3,757	27,339,200
2013	3,726	28,805,386
2014	3,096	27,826,712

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54686/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development has sourced £0.7m of matched and £4.9m of unmatched European Union funding in the last 6 years from April 2009 to March 2015.

A table showing where this money was spent is shown below.

Due to the Department's document retention policy of 7 years, financial information for 2008/09 and earlier years is limited and has therefore been excluded.

DARD EU Funding - South Belfast Constituency

Programme	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Single Farm Payment	724	1,123	903	526	977	552	4,805
NI Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-13 - Axis 1	0	2	10	0	21	23	56
NIRDP 2007-13 - Axis 2	25	39	31	20	55	26	196
NIRDP 2007-13 - Axis 3	0	26	26	5	248	200	505
Total	749	1,190	970	551	1,301	801	5,562

Axis 1 of the NIRDP 2007-13 relates to food and farming and aims to improve competitiveness. It is made up of measures that target farmers and farm families specifically, include benchmarking, focus farms, mentoring and modernisation.

Axis 2 of the NIRDP 2007-13 relates to the protection and enhancement of natural resources and rural landscapes. It is made up of measures that aim to improve the environment and countryside by promoting environmental services, preserving the farmed landscape, encouraging the development of new and existing forests and woodlands and supporting the growth of organic farming.

Axis 3 of the NIRDP 2007-13 relates to quality of rural life and the LEADER approach. It supports farm diversification, business creation and development, tourism, conserving rural heritage, basic services for the rural economy, and village renewal.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to list the groups funded through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation scheme; (ii) which groups will have their funding cut this year; and (iii) by how much their funding will be cut.

(AQW 54704/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The following organisations are currently funded through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation programme to provide the Rural Community Development Support Service:

- Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network, Stewartstown
- County Down Rural Community Network, Downpatrick
- Fermanagh Rural Community Network, Enniskillen
- North Antrim Community Network, Cushendall
- Rural Area Partnership in Derry, Derry
- South Antrim Community Network, Randalstown
- Tyrone, Armagh, Down & Antrim, Portadown

My Department is currently working with these organisations to agree funding for the 2016/2017 financial year.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assessment she has made of the impact that a Brexit would have on the farming community.

(AQW 54759/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: A full analysis of the impacts of Brexit is not feasible given that there are so many unknowns about the international trading relationships and agricultural, budgetary and regulatory policies that would exist post Brexit. However, it is clear that the best way to secure our current trading arrangements with the rest of the EU is to stay a member of the EU. There is no guarantee that we could replicate our current trade arrangements with the EU post Brexit given the discussions around agricultural products are always the most difficult in any trade negotiation. We would also have to agree trading arrangements with the rest of the world, and this would heavily influence both our ability to export successfully to these regions as well as the level of competition we would face from imports.

I do not believe that the British Government shares my view that the current levels of CAP funding going to our farmers and rural communities needs to be maintained. Post Brexit, I believe it would be very difficult to convince the British Treasury to sustain current funding levels because its long held view has been that support for agriculture and rural development needs to be reduced.

Given my beliefs on the likely impacts of Brexit on continued support for farmers and rural communities and my concern about future trading arrangements, I have to conclude that Brexit is not in the interest of farmers in the north.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many bovine animals have been reported missing or stolen in South Down in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54810/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below shows the number of bovine animals reported and recorded on the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) as missing or stolen in the Newry Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) area, for each of the last three financial years;

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of cattle	406	947	497

Information held on APHIS is recorded against a DVO area and not on a constituency basis.

APHIS does not differentiate between missing or stolen cattle.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an estimate of the cost to agriculture of EU regulation.

(AQW 54833/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is unable to answer your question as it does not hold the information that would be required to provide this estimate.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how many animal welfare officers are employed by her Department; (ii) in which council areas do they operate; and (iii) whether she intends to employ more officers.

(AQW 54874/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not employ any Animal Welfare Officers (AWOs); however, Councils employ nine AWOs to enforce the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 in respect of non-farmed animals.

Councils use a cluster approach to deliver their animal welfare service, which is carried out by five Council regions. AWOs work across all Council areas, allowing the service to be maintained across the north.

Decisions on staffing levels are a matter for Councils. I understand that they currently have no plans to employ any additional AWOs.

Full details of Council delivery structures for enforcement of the 2011 Act can be found in the Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. The following link to the Final Report was circulated to all MLAs in advance of its launch on 29 February 2016: www.dardni.gov.uk/publications/review-implementation-welfare-animals-act-ni-2011.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of breed-specific legislation.

(AQW 54875/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The current legislation regarding the control of dogs here is the Dogs Order 1983, as amended, which provides for the licensing of dogs and other related enforcement matters.

The Dangerous Dogs Order 1991 amended the Dogs Order 1983 to designate types of dog that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess. It empowered Courts to order the destruction of these dogs. The four designated types are any dog of the type known as the:

- (1) pit bull terrier;
- (2) Japanese tosa;
- (3) Dogo Argentino; and
- (4) Fila Brasileiro.

The Dangerous Dogs Compensation and Exemption Schemes Order 1991 introduced an Exemption Scheme which allowed the owners of dogs of a banned type born before the ban came into force, and for which a destruction order had been issued, to apply to their Council for an exemption from destruction, which is granted if they meet certain conditions.

Following a comprehensive review of the dog control legislation commissioned in 2007 by my predecessor, Michelle Gildernew, the 1983 Order was updated by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011, to increase the dog licence fee (with concessions for certain classes of owner) and the level of fixed penalties; introduce compulsory microchipping of dogs; introduce an offence of allowing a dog to attack and injure another person's dog; and empower Council dog wardens to impose control conditions on an owner's dog licence where a breach of the Dogs Order has occurred.

As part of the 2007 review, the ban on specific breeds of dangerous dogs was discussed. The views of those who called for the removal of the prohibition on certain types of dogs, and also those who supported the prohibition, were considered. Given the lack of consensus on this issue, and because such breeds, for example pit-bull terriers, have a high pain threshold and a jaw structure developed specifically for fighting, which means that the risk that they pose to public safety remains qualitatively greater, my predecessor concluded that the prohibition should remain. Arising from this review, and as set out in the final policy proposals that were agreed by the Executive in March 2010, the dog control legislation maintained the ban on the four types of dogs bred for fighting and the provisions introduced by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 clarified the status of any dogs that were exempted from the ban on dogs bred for fighting.

Given that a comprehensive review of the dog legislation has been undertaken so recently here, and the consideration that was given to this legislation by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Assembly, I am content that the current ban on specific types of dangerous dogs is appropriate and that the legislation in place provides sufficient controls.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dogs of each breed have been (i) removed; (ii) destroyed; or (iii) later returned to owners under the breed-specific legislation since the legislation was introduced.

(AQW 54876/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog control is legislated for here by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. Councils enforce this legislation and are required to provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation.

DARD does not request information on the breed of dogs seized but Table 1 below provides information provided by Councils in relation to banned/prohibited dogs for each of the last four years.

Table 1

Year	Incidents investigated	Identified	Seized	Voluntarily surrendered	Destroyed	Exempted & returned
2015	27	4	1	0	0	2
2014	55	14	4	7	2	1
2013	81	8	3	4	2	1
2012	80	11	5	2	0	3

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what (i) proportion; and (ii) number of dogs are microchipped. (AQW 54877/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog control is legislated for here by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. Councils implement this legislation and provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation. These statistics are collated on an annual basis.

In 2015, 137,216 dog licences were issued by Councils. Of these, 127 dogs were exempted from the requirement to be microchipped. Therefore 99.9% of licensed dogs here are microchipped, which is 137,089 dogs.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what (i) proportion; and (ii) number of greyhound racing dogs are microchipped. (AQW 54878/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: From 1 January 2013, under the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations 2012, all dogs, including greyhounds, kept under a block licence issued on or after 9 April 2012 have had to be microchipped from eight weeks of age. In addition, anyone applying for a block licence, on or after 1 January 2013, must have any dog aged eight weeks or over microchipped before they apply for the licence.

Any dog, including a greyhound, which is not kept under a block licence, must be microchipped in accordance with the Dogs Order 1983 as amended.

If a dog is not microchipped in accordance with the Dogs Order 1983 or the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations 2012, it is not considered licensed, which is an offence liable to prosecution.

While Councils implement this legislation and provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation, including the number of microchipped dogs that are licensed by Councils, these statistics do not include information on dog breeds. My Department therefore does not hold information on the number or proportion of greyhounds that are microchipped.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support her Department is giving to struggling farmers that are experiencing financial pressure. (AQW 54885/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: I fully acknowledge the very tough time farmers have endured over the last 2 years. The financial difficulties that farmers face reinforce my determination to work closely with the banks and to ensure they demonstrate their commitment to the industry. I have met banking representatives several times in the past year and have asked them to pro-actively engage with farmers, be flexible in their approach and provide the appropriate help and assistance required to ease cash flow difficulties in the business.

My Department is working hard to help all sectors become more efficient and profitable. This support includes enhancing our penetration of existing markets; helping open up new markets; business support proposals through the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme; our robust approach to tackling animal health issues; and support for skills, research and knowledge transfer.

One of the schemes being rolled out in a phased way by my Department under the current Rural Development Programme is the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS). The first phase of this was the opening of the Business Development Groups Programme in November 2015. I recently announced that over 3000 eligible applicants to these Groups will be offered a place within them. This programme aims to help farmers improve their technical and business efficiency.

I have consistently indicated that a collaborative approach, with producers, processors, banks, and government all working together, is the best way to deal with the challenges currently facing the agricultural sector.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers' markets are in regular operation; and on how many days a year do they operate. (AQW 54925/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Farmers' markets are an important market outlet for some farmers. They provide farmers and artisan food producers with an opportunity to showcase fresh local produce and high quality speciality foods. This role is particularly

important as we progress through the 2016 Year of Food and Drink. Farmers' markets give producers the chance to meet and build positive relationships with customers and consumers. As well as serving the local community, farmers' markets are an attraction to tourists from elsewhere in Ireland and further afield.

There are currently more than 23 markets in the north where local farmers may sell their produce directly to the public. Many of these markets are not exclusively farmers' markets; they also sell crafts etc. Although the majority of the markets operate in counties Antrim and Down, they are found in all six counties. While most of the markets are organised by local Councils, other organisations (e.g. churches) are also involved. Approximately 10 markets open one day per month, another 10 open one day per week and the remainder open more frequently.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many projects connected to soil research have been undertaken by, and for, her Department in each of the last eight years; and to detail the cost of each research project. **(AQW 54926/11-16)**

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has funded 10 evidence and innovation research projects including one long term strategic research project within the DARD-directed AFBI work programme over the past 8 years. In addition, 5 PhD projects connected to soil research have been funded through the DARD Postgraduate Scheme in the past 8 years.

The 9 evidence and innovation projects were funded a total of £2.37M over a total of 18 project years within the DARD-directed AFBI work programme. The long-term strategic project, ongoing since 1970, has been funded approximately £647k over the last 8 years. Finally, the 5 PhD research projects connected to soil research received approximately £247K of funding.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has any plans to make it an aggravated offence to attack a guide dog or assistance dog.

(AQW 54931/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog control here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended, and Councils are responsible for enforcing this legislation.

The Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 amended the Dogs Order 1983 to include a number of new provisions, including a new offence of allowing a dog to attack and injure any other animal owned by another person. Prior to this provision, which came into operation on 28 July 2011, it was not an offence to allow a dog to attack and injure an animal, excluding livestock, owned by another person.

This provision of the Act recognises the grave pain and distress an attack on a much-loved pet, or a much needed assistance dog, can inflict on its owners. It also recognises that an owner who is not responsible enough to prevent their dog attacking and injuring another person's dog may need to be forced by law to manage their animal properly before it attacks and injures a person.

The Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 strengthened what was already some of the most robust dog control legislation on these islands to allow Council Dog Wardens to protect the public, including those that rely on assistance dogs, from dog attacks.

Although a dog attack on a guide dog or assistance dog is not an aggravated offence within the Dogs Order 1983, a court can, upon the prosecution proving that the act was committed, determine any aggravating factors such as the fact that the dog attacked was an assistance dog. If the court determines that there are aggravating factors this will be taken into account when sentencing and the defendant may receive a higher sentence.

The Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) protects the welfare of all dogs, including guide dogs and assistance dogs. A person found guilty of an offence of causing unnecessary suffering is liable to a maximum sentence on conviction on indictment of up to 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, or on summary conviction of up to 6 months imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine.

The Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the 2011 Act, which was published on 29 February 2016, recommended that the maximum sentences are increased to 5 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine upon conviction on indictment, and for the more serious summary offences, to 12 months imprisonment and/or a £20,000 fine. These amendments to the 2011 Act are being taken forward in the Justice (No. 2) Bill. A copy of the Final Report of the Review can be found at the following link, which was circulated to all MLAs in advance of its launch on 29 February 2016: www.dardni.gov.uk/publications/review-implementation-welfare-animals-act-ni-2011.

As regards aggravated offences, the Review concluded that they should not be introduced within the 2011 Act on the basis that aggravated offences would potentially make it more difficult to obtain a conviction. This is because where a person is prosecuted for an aggravated offence, it is necessary for the prosecution to prove both that the defendant committed the act that allegedly occurred, and also the aggravated element of the offence. If the aggravation part of that offence is not proven, then the defendant will not be convicted of the offence.

The Review also found that to define aggravation in animal welfare offences would be problematic. The aggravating element must be separate, that is, the extreme nature of the suffering caused or the specific intention of the assailant to cause suffering cannot in itself be sufficient to prove an aggravated offence. To define, and subsequently prove, aggravation requires elements of another crime being perpetrated against the animal at the time the animal welfare offence is being committed.

I therefore have no plans to make it an aggravated offence to attack a guide dog or assistance dog.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on consideration given to banning circuses with wild animals.

(AQW 54946/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Legislation to ban the use of wild animals in circuses can only be introduced if there is a need to do so and, if a ban is to be introduced under animal welfare legislation, welfare issues must be identified and supported by evidence. As I advised in my answers to your previous Assembly Questions on this issue, I would need to be assured of the merit of such legislation and that such a ban was justified.

My Department continues to monitor the position in other jurisdictions. I am aware that a Private Member's Bill to prohibit the use of wild animals in circuses, entitled the Wild Animals in Circuses (Prohibition) Bill, was introduced to Parliament on Wednesday 10 February under the Ten Minute Rule and is expected to have its second reading debate on Friday 11 March 2016. It remains the case that the proposed ban in England is being brought forward on ethical grounds as the available scientific evidence does not support the view that the welfare of animals in circuses is sufficiently compromised to justify a ban.

Although no circuses are currently based here, those that travel here must comply with the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. The 2011 Act provides a range of powers to safeguard the welfare of animals here, including wild animals in circuses. The 2011 Act is enforced by Councils for non-farmed animals, including those in circuses.

It is an offence under the 2011 Act to cause an animal to suffer, either through a deliberate action or by failure to act. Where there is reason to believe that an animal is suffering or likely to suffer, an inspector can, without a police presence, take immediate action to alleviate its suffering.

My officials continue to investigate the possibility of an all-island approach to the issue of wild animals in travelling circuses and are engaged with officials from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in the south under the auspices of the North South Animal Welfare and Transport Working Group. Engagement has taken place with stakeholders who would be directly affected by any proposals on the use of animals in travelling circuses and DARD officials continue to work with DAFM officials with a view to adopting a Code of Practice on an all-island basis. The purpose of a Code of Practice would be to ensure that operators are clear about their responsibilities to ensure that the welfare of animals is protected.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many homes are built in areas assessed as being at risk of flooding.

(AQW 54955/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, as required by the Floods Directive, indicates that approximately 46,000 properties, which includes homes, are at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Around 20,000 properties are at risk of flooding from surface water. However many of these properties may already be at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an estimate of the number of stray dogs.

(AQW 54971/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The control of dogs here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. Councils implement this legislation and provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation. These statistics, which include details on the number of stray dogs identified and impounded, are collated on an annual basis.

Table 1 below details the number of stray dogs impounded by Councils and how these were disposed of in each of the last four years.

Table 1 Number of stray dogs dealt with by Councils from 2012 to 2015

Year	Identified & Returned to Owner	Impounded	Impounded Dogs Reclaimed	Impounded Dogs Re-Homed	Impounded Dogs Unclaimed and Humanely Destroyed
2015	1,040	4,613	1,774	2,510	329
2014	1,482	5,352	1,985	2,900	467
2013	1,398	5,838	2,162	3,017	659
2012	1,936	6,252	2,059	3,384	809

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the implications of an EU exit on her Department and the new Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; and what preparations her Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 55059/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The implications of an EU exit would be disastrous and profound for my Department and for DAERA as they would be for the agri-food sector and, indeed, the wider economy and environmental sector given the €2.6 billion of Pillar 1 & 2 monies which my department expects to draw down from Europe by 2020 as well as the renegotiation of trade agreements. The EU body of law and policy underpins much of our current agenda and creates the framework within which we work. That would have to be replaced in the event of an EU exit, which would be an immense task.

A withdrawal from the EU would take effect following the conclusion of a withdrawal agreement or no more than two years after the formal notification of the withdrawal. That two year period could be extended, subject to the unanimous agreement of the remaining EU Member States. The period between the notification to withdraw and the withdrawal taking effect would be used to negotiate the terms of this withdrawal agreement. Clearly, the devolved administrations would need to be closely involved in that process. However, arguably the much greater task would be the creation of the domestic policy and legal framework which would replace that which is currently shaped by the EU. This is not something that could be undertaken unilaterally by any of the devolved administrations, though clearly they would all have to be very closely involved in the process. That process could not start in advance of a decision to exit the EU, but I very much hope that this is not a situation we will be forced to face.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what additional red meat export markets her Department is exploring.

(AQW 55082/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: I am pleased that there are already a significant number of export markets open for our red meat. Most recently I welcomed the opening of the Canadian beef market which I know was valued by our industry and exports have already commenced.

Going forward I hope 2016 will see us opening even more priority red meat markets. My officials are working closely with our industry to prepare for inspections this year from the Philippines on beef and United States of America on beef and lamb as part of the process to agree terms to trade with these markets.

China remains a top priority for beef. We have made good progress in our negotiations with China and a second workshop to discuss our controls on TSE is planned for 2016. This is an important stage in what will be a lengthy negotiation process.

My officials also continue to work closely with our industry to identify any other red meat markets that represent a priority for them and through this engagement determine how government and industry can best work together to take forward negotiations.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the work of the Agri-Food Strategy Board Supply Chain Forum.

(AQW 55083/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Supply Chain Forum was established at my request by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in 2015, with the first formal meeting taking place in October at the Food Innovation Centre at Loughry. That meeting brought together around 100 representatives from right across the supply chain and across a number of sectors to engage in open and frank discussions on issues such as volatility, competitiveness, sustainability, north/south collaboration and the need for contracts.

Feedback from the attendees indicated that the event was very well received, with the vast majority of comments being positive. Key themes emerging from the day include the need for enhanced communication and greater collaboration, and recognition that action is required to improve the supply chain. Further detail on the presentations and discussions is available on the AFSB website¹.

I recently received an update from the Chair on proposals for the next event which is expected to be held in the coming weeks. I reiterated my view of the importance of maintaining the momentum gained from the October meeting. I understand that the AFSB has been engaged in significant ground work in preparing for the next Forum, with a particular focus on identifying measures to help all parts of the supply chain manage the impact of volatility. I believe that the Forum is the right mechanism to facilitate discussion and look forward to receiving an update from its next meeting.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support her Department can offer farmers in East Londonderry to engage with and participate in Northern Ireland's Year of Food and Drink 2016.

(AQW 55086/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: You will be aware that the Year of Food and Drink 2016 (YoF&D 2016) is a cross-departmental initiative led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

My Department is supporting the YoF&D 2016 in a number of ways. There are activities being planned by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) at Loughry Campus. In addition to this, my Department is providing funding through the Regional Food Programme (RFP).

The RFP supports projects/events/activities delivered by 'not for profit' agri-food groups which are representative of local producers (including farmers) and/or processors which will promote local agri-food products.

¹ <http://www.agrifoodstrategyboard.org.uk/publications/category/8/supply-chain-forum>

Examples of some of the events that are being supported by the RFP during the YoF&D 2016 include the Food Pavilion at Balmoral Show 2016, Bank of Ireland Open Farm Weekend, the NI Potato Festival at the Giant's Causeway and the Food Pavilion at Ballymoney Show.

I would encourage farmers in your constituency to get involved in any of the activities that are taking place within their local area. In particular the Bank of Ireland Open Farm Weekend will be taking place on 18th – 19th June 2016. This initiative, which is in its fourth year, aims to increase the level of understanding of food production and the work of our farmers amongst members of the public. By demonstrating the farm to fork supply chain, the initiative reconnects visitors with farmers, food producers, processors and the countryside and educates them on the key role played by the agri-food sector in our economy. This initiative is led by the Ulster Farmers' Union and further details can be found at <http://www.openfarmweekend.com/Open-My-Farm.aspx>.

It is my hope that the Year of Food and Drink 2016 will leave a lasting positive legacy for our agri-food industry.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 49629/11-16 and AQW 49628/11-16, and given her reliance on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) guidance, whether her Department will seek consent for Northern Ireland to be included in proposed legislation to ban circuses with animals, as outlined in DEFRA's 2015-2020 departmental plan, or alternatively, seek to introduce Northern Ireland specific legislation.
(AQW 55137/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: In my answers to your previous questions, AQW 49629/11-16 and AQW 49628/11-16, the reference to the Defra guidance on their Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (England) Regulations 2012 was provided for your own information in relation to how the welfare needs of particular animals can be met in a travelling circus. No inference was made regarding reliance upon the guidance by my Department.

My officials are engaging with officials from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in the south under the auspices of the North South Animal Welfare and Transport Working Group to continue to investigate the possibility of an all-island approach to the issue of wild animals in travelling circuses through adoption of a Code of Practice on an all-island basis. The purpose of a Code of Practice would be to ensure that operators are clear about their responsibilities to ensure that the welfare of animals is protected.

My Department continues to monitor the position in other jurisdictions and I am aware that a Wild Animals in Circuses (Prohibition) Bill is expected to have its second reading debate on 11 March 2016, having been introduced to Parliament on 10 February 2016 as a Private Member's Bill under the Ten Minute Rule.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much of the European Fisheries Fund is projected to be spent in South Down in the next five years.
(AQW 55190/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) provides €13.73m core-grant funding for the next five years. In addition to the EMFF funding, the Programme requires Member States to provide "national funding" to complement the Commission's contribution, meaning approximately €18.3m will be available to support fishermen, processors, port authorities, aquaculture operations, community-led local development and other stakeholders.

While a significant proportion of stakeholders are based in South Down, it is currently not possible to provide a projection of spend over the next five years at this time as it will depend on the quantity and quality of applications received when the Programme opens for applications.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much departmental funding has gone to GAA clubs since May 2011.
(AQW 55270/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: In many rural areas across the island, the GAA is often the hub of the local community and I value the efforts of their members, mainly in a voluntary capacity towards providing activities and programmes which encourage social inclusion.

Local Action Groups have competitively assessed a number of applications under Axis 3 where the GAA has promoted a project that benefits the wider rural community and which was separate from their primary activity. To date 15 such projects worth almost £ 3 million have been funded since May 2007.

In addition to this my Department, under Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework, has funded five GAA clubs who received a total of £31,219 from the Rural Challenge Programme scheme. All of these projects focused on community health and well being initiatives.

I would also add that similar projects that benefit the wider community have also been successful from other sporting clubs such as sailing, soccer, athletics and Special Olympics.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the provision of capital funding for boxing clubs outside Belfast.

(AQW 54849/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Capital funding is being provided to improve boxing club premises under Sport NI's Boxing Investment Lottery Programme and my Department's City of Culture legacy programme.

To date, boxing clubs outside Belfast are at the following stages of the capital works programmes:-

- Eight clubs have had capital work completed;
- Four clubs have contractors currently on site; and
- Six clubs are at various points within the design, planning and procurement stages.

In addition to the above, three boxing clubs from outside Belfast have been invited by Sport NI to progress through the application process for the Single Facility Fund for sports facilities.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the publications which have received support from the Arts Council since May 2011; and the amount of funding awarded for each publication.

(AQW 54852/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Publications that have received support from the Arts Council are listed in the table attached at Annex A.

You should note that where awards have been made under the Annual Funding Programme, the amount awarded will include other organisational costs as well as a contribution towards the publications.

Publications That Have Received Support From ACNI

Annex A

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2011-2012	Alternative Ulster	Annual Support for Organisations	Monthly editions of Alternative Ulster magazine	29,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Blackstaff Press Limited	Annual Support for Organisations	Erne: A Tale of Two Loughs, Alain Le Garsmeur and Keith Baker Titanic: Made in Belfast, Alain Le Garsmeur The Shelter of Neighbour, Eilis Ni Dhuibhne A Twisted Root, Patricia Craig The Story of the Belfast Taxi, Lee Henry May, Lou and Cass: The Story of Jane Austen's Nieces in Ireland, Sophia Hillan Poetry Collection by Michael Foley	79,300	Exchequer
2011-2012	Guildhall Press	Annual Support for Organisations	The Hatchet Man, Garbhan Downey The Dangerous Edge of Things, Freya McClements and Felicity McCall Fire Burst, collected writings of several authors Sport in the North West, Richie Kelly Dancing Days, a social history of dance halls and their patrons in the NW Image Waterside, a pictorial record of the Waterside area of Derry~Londonderry Belmont School 50th Anniversary publication Murals of Derry; Streets of Derry, compiled by John Bryson Derry Tourist Guide 2011	35,000	Exchequer

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2011-2012	Irish Pages Ltd.	Annual Support for Organisations	2 editions of "Irish Pages" journal	30,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Lagan Press Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations	The Resurrection of the Body in Killysaggan, Martin Mooney Ion, Jean Bleakney Ha Ha, Gary Allen The Return of the Buffalo, Deirdre Cartmill Collected Plays, Joseph Tomelty's	49,600	Exchequer
2011-2012	Poetry Ireland	Annual Support for Organisations	Quarterly publication of "Poetry Ireland Review" Fortnightly publication of "Poetry Ireland News"	30,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	SAMM NI	Arts Development Fund	Love is the Memory, Anthology of Poems, Various	1,460	Exchequer
2011-2012	Lagan Legacy	Arts Development Fund	The Sinking of the Titanic, Hans Magnus Enzenberger	5,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Ward Wylie Atelier	Arts Development Fund	1974 - Belfast Lost, Ward Wylie Atelier (Architects)	4,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Irish Pages Ltd.	Arts Development Fund	Introduction to writing in Irish, Scots Gaelic & Scots, Anthology, Various	3,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	The Yellow Nib	Arts Development Fund	"Yellow Nib" Spring 2012 Edition	4,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Discovery Publications	Creative Industries	Nelly Fandango, ebook, Declan Carville	10,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Guildhall Press	Creative Industries	Derry - City of Music, ebook, Various	10,000	Exchequer
2011-2012	Abridged	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Abridged"	15,000	Lottery
2011-2012	Books Review Ireland Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	9 editions of "Books Ireland" magazine	18,000	Lottery
2011-2012	Little Island Books Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	Children's book by Sheena Wilkinson Children's book by Felicity McCall	17,732	Lottery
2011-2012	Verbal Arts Centre	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Verbal" magazine	30,300	Lottery
2012-2013	The Lyric Theatre (NI)	Arts Development Fund	Lyric Architectural Publication	2745.00	Exchequer

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2012-2013	Blackstaff Press Limited	Annual Funding Programme	<p>Eighty Not Out, Elizabeth, McCullough</p> <p>On My Own Two Wheels, Malachi O'Doherty</p> <p>Ciaran Carson / Brian Ballard collaboration</p> <p>Radio-script extracts by Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon and Michael Longley, edited by Douglas Carson</p> <p>Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow, ebook, Lilis Ni Dhuibhne</p> <p>Collected Short Stories, ebook, Michael McLaverty</p> <p>Pen Friend, ebook, Ciaran Carson</p> <p>Way To Go, ebook, Geoff Hill</p> <p>Fat Lad, ebook, Glenn Patterson</p>	84,742	Lottery
2012-2013	Guildhall Press	Annual Funding Programme	<p>A Sudden Sun, Dave Duggan</p> <p>The Trouble With McCauley, Charlie Herron</p> <p>Rain Spill, Jenni Doherty</p> <p>Visitors, Catherine Canning</p> <p>Re-Imagine Derry, Mark Willett and other photographers</p> <p>Factory Girls Remember, Willie Deery</p> <p>Whispers, Shouts and Silence, Various.</p>	48,638	Lottery
2012-2013	Irish Pages Ltd.	Annual Funding Programme	2 editions of "Irish Pages" journal	30,000	Lottery
2012-2013	Poetry Ireland	Annual Funding Programme	<p>Quarterly publication of "Poetry Ireland Review"</p> <p>Fortnightly publication of "Poetry Ireland News"</p>	42,782	Lottery
2012-2013	Irish Pages Ltd.	Arts Development Fund	The Other Tongues: An Introduction to Writing in Irish, Scots Gaelic & Scots in Ulster & the West of Scotland, Various	6,000	Exchequer
2012-2013	Abridged	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Abridged"	15,000	Lottery
2012-2013	Books Review Ireland Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	9 editions of "Books Ireland" magazine	18,000	Lottery
2012-2013	Liberties Media Ltd (Trading Name: Liberties Press)	Lottery - Project Funding	<p>Selected Poems, Moyra Donaldson</p> <p>Inside Ulster: Conversations from Belfast to Ballybeg, Mark Carruthers</p> <p>A Heart Blown Open, Bethany Dawson</p>	19,478	Lottery
2012-2013	Little Island Books Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	9 childrens's books	17,732	Lottery

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2013-2014	Guildhall Press	Annual Funding Programme	Valberg, Des Doherty Foster's Tales, Brian Foster New Dawn, Jacqueline Doherty Milk Teeth, Julieann Campbell The Slater's Son, Fionnuala Carlin The Pigeon Men, Felicity McCall	47,100	Lottery
2013-2014	Irish Pages Ltd.	Annual Funding Programme	2 editions of "Irish Pages" journal	29,000	Lottery
2013-2014	Abridged	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Abridged"	14,550	Lottery
2013-2014	Lagan Press Ltd	Lottery - Project Funding	Ebook on the work and life of Padraic Fiacc	17,436	Lottery
2013-2014	Liberties Media Ltd (Trading Name: Liberties Press)	Lottery - Project Funding	Poets Are Eaten as a Delicacy in Japan, Tara West. Malcom Orange Disappears, Jan Carson Thickets Wood, Rebecca Reid Horse's Nest, Moyra Donaldson Glass, Jason Johnson	19,478	Lottery
2013-2014	Little Island Books Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	The Powers: The Not-So-Superheroes, Kevin Stevens The Keeper, Darragh Martin The Hatching, Annie Graves Fennymore and the Brumella, Kirsten Reinhardt Alexandra, Siobhan Parkinson Fionnuala, Siobhan Parkinson Primperfect, Deirdre Sullivan	17,200	Lottery
2014-2015	Abridged	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Abridged"	13,500	Lottery
2014-2015	Doire Press	Small Grants Programme	Walking to Marconi's, Elaine Gaston	1,500	Lottery
2014-2015	Liberties Media Ltd (Trading Name: Liberties Press)	Lottery - Project Funding	Alternative Ulsters, Mark Carruthers; (paperback edition); Best of Enemies: The Story of John Caldwell and Freddie Gilroy, Barry Flynn; Cherry Tree, Rebecca Reid; Aloysius Tempo, Jason Johnson; The Organised Criminal, Jarlath Gregory.	19,478	Lottery

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2014-2015	Little Island Books Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	"The Unfair Funfair" by Anne Greaves; "If You Fall" by Sheena Wilkinson; "The Wordsmith" by Patricia Forde; "Suitcases: Clock or Crown" by Síle McArdle.	17,200	Lottery
2014-2015	Outline Press (Book Publishers) Ltd	Lottery - Project Funding	"The Wheels of the World: John McSherry and the Continuum of Uilleann Pipin" by Colin Harper and John McSherry.	19,862	Lottery
2014-2015	Somerville Press Ltd	Small Grants Programme	"Bookworm - A Memoir of Childhood Reading" by Patricia Craig	2,880	Lottery
2014-2015	The Gallery Press	Lottery - Project Funding	"From Elsewhere" by Ciaran Carson "Red Sails" by Derek Mahon "Scapegoat" by Alan Gillis "Mickey Finn's Air" by Gerald Dawe "The Irish for No" by Ciaran Carson "Belfast Confetti" by Ciaran Carson "Crediting Poetry" by Seamus Heaney (reprint)	12,800	Lottery
2014-2015	The Yellow Nib	Small Grants Programme	Issues 10 and 11 of 'The Yellow Nib' Magaazine	3,150	Lottery
2014-2015	Wordwell Ltd	Small Grants Programme	6 copies of Books Ireland magazine.	3,121	Lottery
2015-2016	Abridged	Lottery - Project Funding	3 editions of "Abridged"	13,500	Lottery
2015-2016	Blackstaff Press Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	"The Faerie Thorn" by Jane Talbot Rodney Edward, "Sure, Why Would Ye Not" by Rodney Edward "The Wasted Years" by Mary Larkin "Full Circle" by Mary Larkin "New Poets from the North of Ireland" Sinead Morrissey and Stephen Connolly (eds) Two other books in development Moon's Travelling Circus, Helen Nicholl The Shankill – no editor confirmed	36,794	Lottery
2015-2016	Doire Press	Small Grants Programme	"The Woman on the Other Side" by Stephanie Conn	2,250	Lottery
2015-2016	Guildhall Press	Lottery - Project Funding	Deadlight' by Des Doherty; 'The Northwest Chronicle', by Garbhan Downey; 'Isle of Crime', a print and multi-media digital collection by 12 of Ireland's most renowned crime authors.	24,650	Lottery
2015-2016	Irish Academic Press	Small Grants Programme	"Michael Allen: Close Readings Essays on the Poetry of Northern Ireland" Edited by Fran Brearton	1,750	Lottery

Finance Year	Organization Name	Programme	Publication	Grant Amount	Fund
2015-2016	Irish Pages Ltd.	Annual Funding Programme	2 Issues of Irish Pages	29,000	Lottery
2015-2016	Liberties Media Ltd (Trading Name: Liberties Press)	Lottery - Project Funding	"Vinny's Wilderness" by Janet Shepperson "Children's Children" by Jan Carson "Trinity" by Jarlath Gregory "Happy Dark" by Tara West "The Edge of Heaven" by R. B. Kelly	16,050	Lottery
2015-2016	Little Island Books Limited	Lottery - Project Funding	"Name Upon Name" by Sheen Wilkinson "A Lonely Note", by Kevin Stevens "Needlework" by Deirdre Sullivan "The Best Medicine" by Christine Hamill	15,000	Lottery
2015-2016	New Island Books Ltd	Lottery - Project Funding	"The Wing Orderly's Tales" by Carlo Gébler; "Drowning the Gowns" by Peter Hollywood	11,750	Lottery
2015-2016	New Island Books Ltd	Small Grants Programme	"The Projectionist" by Carlo Gébler	3,000	Lottery
2015-2016	Somerville Press Ltd	Small Grants Programme	"Starman: The True Story of Willie Kean, Journalist and Rebel" by Conor O'Clery	1,000	Lottery
2015-2016	The Gallery Press	Small Grants Programme	Book of poems by Derek Mahon	1,500	Lottery
2015-2016	The O'Brien Press Ltd	Lottery - Project Funding	"Past Darkness" by Sam Millar "Bobby Sands" by Gerry Hunt	12,488	Lottery

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how football clubs such as Ballinamallard United, Dungannon Swifts and Warrenpoint can fulfil the supporter accommodation criteria in the Sub-Regional Stadium Programme.
(AQW 54938/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Supporter accommodation criteria for football grounds are determined by the respective football leagues. Clubs should liaise with the appropriate leagues regarding the relevant guidance.

Public consultation on the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for soccer ended on 22 February 2016 with almost 1200 responses to the consultation having been received. These are now receiving detailed consideration and analysis by my officials.

Responses to the consultation document will help to shape the programme going forward; including the eligibility criteria for the programme.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of the expenditure from the City of Culture legacy funding since January 2014.
(AQW 54980/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A breakdown of the funding allocation to support the City of Culture legacy from January 2014 – March 2016 is provided in the attached tables.

January to March 2014 Period:

Project	Total
Other Voices	£583,870
Community Cultural Strategies	£108,485
Music Promise	£154,346
Portrait of a City	£76,112
Go Berserk	£15,639

Project	Total
Humindger Festival	£26,066
Nerve Centre (FAB LAB)	£6,256
Lumiere Stitch in Time	£52,131
Portable Marquee	£64,187
Social Media services	£4,000
Walled City Tattoo	£70,000
NRA Community leader development training	£3,200
Outer West Community Cultural Projects	£9,000
Community Cultural Activity (Pan Celtic Festival, St.Patrick's Day Festival, Jazz Festival, Music City Day, Stendhal, marketing)	£151,181
Armoured Pram	£25,000
North Coast Sports Village	£232,000
Boxing	£120,000
Creative Marketplace	£403,300
GRAND TOTAL	£2,104,773

North West Community Cultural Programme 2014/2015 - £1M

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
Support for Continuation of Key City of Culture 2013 Events c£280k	Music Promise	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community music programme. SYNC element of Music Promise delivered by Nerve Centre.
	Portrait of a City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community digital programme. Digital training delivered by Hive in Creggan.
	Music City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 music showcase. A weekend of school and community music programming with extension to wider NW in partnership with DCC and include marching bands and Ulster-Scots showcase activity.
	CultureTech	The North West's key digital and creative development festival. Extension of outreach to wider North West including Big Video Challenge in all NW schools.
	City Wide Festival Step Up Support	Step up support for community festival activity in Derry. Next Steps Partnership Group comprising Culturlann, LD Bands Forum, Tattoo, Maiden City Festival and Gasyard Feile.
	Walled City Tattoo	Support committed in 2013/ 14 for August 2014 Walled City Tattoo Event.
	An Droichead	An Culturlann cross community project with marching bands established as part of the 2013 All Ireland Fleadh.
	VAC Reading Rooms	Verbal Arts Centre's City of Culture 2013 literacy project now extended to the wider North West and Belfast.
	Playhouse	Extension of outreach programme to wider NW. Programme in partnership with PSNI targeting disengaged young people.
	Women of the World	November 2014 festival exploring women's issues. Specifically support for WoW schools event.

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
City Based NRA Capacity Building Interventions c£140k	Community Cultural Strategies	Support for activity, projects and events under Derry's four Community Cultural Strategies – Waterside, Outer West, Outer North and Triax. Variety of activity including festivals, events, engagement projects, skills development, a cultural audit and updating Waterside's Strategy.

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
Wider North West NRA and Rural Community Capacity Building Interventions c£112k	Joint NRA Project	Talent North West Project. A project coordinated and delivered by Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) partnerships across the North West to develop new networks; share learning; and showcase local talent. The first time NRAs across the NW have collaborated on a joint project.
	Limavady	NRA targeted cultural projects across town and rural Community Associations to link the rural groups with the urban groups. Support for Stendhal Festival, community based arts festival, to allow continuation of outreach programme across the NW.
	Coleraine	NRA and rural targeted project with WOMAD delivering music, dance and art events with a focus on encouraging respect for different cultures and building capacity in community organisations to deliver events.
	Strabane	NRA and rural targeted projects with Alley Theatre: two productions with NRA and rural community for performance in January and February 2015; and craft collective community craft workshops and masterclass in Strabane Social Hub.
Cultural Hub Development c£255k	Creative Learning Centre Development	Allocations to Nerve Centre and via NI Screen in line with Executive commitment under the Innovation Strategy to enhance our Creative Learning Centres. Projects including Creativity Month, Conference and Cinema project.
	Rosemount	Programme support for cultural hub at Rosemount Factory.
	Mid Ulster	Support for Cornstore Creative Hub, community based facility, to extend Rural Key music outreach (rural version of SYNC).
Delivery, Marketing and Coordination c£213k	DCAL internal admin costs associated with NW Socio Economic Development Programme, direct DCAL event costs (eg Audience NI Conference 11 March 2015); marketing banners and pop up stands; and costs associated with wider coordination work to develop new linkages and partnerships in the North West. (5% of overall NW Socio Economic Development Programme.)	

North West Capital Event Delivery Equipment Programme 2014/2015 - £810k

Location	Organisation	Details
NW wide outreach c£250k	CultureTECH	Minecraft Edu licenses for use in every post primary school across the North West
	Nerve Centre	Nerve Centre mobile FabLab to extend outreach to wider North West
	Waterside Theatre	Soundbeam sensory device for disability outreach
	Playhouse Theatre	Disability access and theatre link up IT equipment
	Verbal Arts Centre	Mobile reading rooms bus to extend literacy project.
	Derry City Council	Tower Museum; Ebrington Gallery; Formula Derr E skills and educational projects.
Derry based community focussed events c£200k	Culturlann ui Chanain, City Centre	Event delivery equipment – sound, lighting.
	Celtronic, City Centre	Recording studio.
	Gasyard, Triax	Additional kit for community marquee.
	GSCA, Outer North	Event delivery equipment – sound, lighting.
	Leafair, Outer North	Portacabin to house expanding cultural and sporting programme for men
	Artichoke, Waterside	Burning Temple March 2015; securing Teenage Kicks sign
	Maiden City Motor Club, Waterside	Rally event est as part of CoC2013. Event delivery and safety equipment.

Location	Organisation	Details
Strabane and Bready £100k	Various organisations including theatre and community associations	Event delivery equipment to enhance community outreach programmes; Mini bus for community transport; project equipment for community skills development
Limavady £100k	Stendhal Festival	Site, management and production equipment, inc sound, staging, lighting
Coleraine £100k	Coleraine Council	Mobile staging for community festivals which council will manage to enhance local community events
Bellaghy and Draperstown £60k	Mid Ulster Council Cornstore Hub	Listening wands for Seamus Heaney Interpretive Centre Mini bus for community transport
Optimism Bias	N/A	Subject to additional Ministerial approvals

North West Capital Cultural Hub Development Programme 2014/2015 - £266,500
Community Centres – Digital and Specialist Equipment

		DCAL NW cultural hubs	Allocation
1	Outer North	St Bridgets School	30,000
2	Outer West	Rosemount Factory	25,000
3	Waterside	Shared Future Centre	30,000
4		Hillcrest House	
5	Triax Area	The Hive	35,000
6	Strabane and Castledearg	SECA, Strabane	50,000
7		Churchtown Community Association	
8		Fountain Street, Strabane	
9	Limavady/Dungiven	St Mary's Limavady	50,000
10		Glens Community Association	
11		Benbradagh Community Support	
12	Coleraine inc Portstewart	Ballysally Youth and Community Centre	30,000
13		Flowerfield, Portstewart	
14	NW wide outreach/ partnership	Aras Colmcille	16,500

Capital Refurbishments 2014/2015 - £532K

Cultural Hub	Detail	(£,000)
Culturlann, Derry	Contribution to refurb of building adjacent to Irish language centre in partnership with DSD	150
GasYard, Derry	Contribution to new floor in GasYard drum to house dance studio in partnership with DSD	22
Na Magha Camogie	Contribution to new facility to increase outreach and create sporting hub in partnership with DSD	50
Rosemount, Derry	Small scale refurb to allow establishment of a cultural hub in location identified as most appropriate for pilot	30
Nerve Centre, Derry	Enhancement of FabLab space at Magazine Street in line with Executive Innovation Strategy commitment	280

In the 14/15 financial year, £1.249m was allocated to the North Coast Sports Village and £75k was allocated to Boxing projects bringing the total investment from January 2014 to 31 March 2015 to £6,037,273.

In the 2015 / 2016 financial year, the following allocations have been made:

Capital Allocation

Project	Detail	(£,000)
Museum of Free Derry	Contribution to fund the construction and development of the Museum of Free Derry.	500,000
Cultural Hubs Development through Nerve Centre	Support for community organisations in the North West to expand and enhance the arts & cultural provision through cutting edge specialist computer equipment and technology.	253,000
Bands Forum – Building Purchase	To secure the purchase of property at Hawkin Street, Derry and continue the development of an Ulster Scots Quarter.	150,000
An Culturlann – Building Purchase	To secure the purchase of property at 31 Great James Street, Derry and continue the development of a Gaeltacht Quarter.	150,000
Dungiven Sports Complex	Funding for the construction of capital sports facilities in Dungiven. (2015/16 allocation)	2,500,000
Rosemount Cultural Hub Fire Safety	To enable Fire Safety work to be carried out at the Rosemount Cultural Hub.	7,000
Creative and Digital Learning Centre and Archiving Project	Develop an accessible creative and digital learning facility at the Northside Village Centre and the purchase of equipment to develop a central archive hub for the Outer North / Greater Shantallow area.	100,000
	Total	3,660,000

Resource Allocation

Project	Detail	(£,000)
Evaluate 2014/ 15 NW Programme (Talent NW)	Funding to undertake an evaluation of the Talent North West Pilot Project	6,000
NRA Culture and Heritage Audit promotion	Grant to allow 4 NRAs to organise events to promote and market the recently published Heritage and Cultural Audit.	4,000
Bands Forum Consultation Exercise - Next Steps Together	Undertake an audit and map on a community wide basis, work undertaken by the various organisations which presently operate on an ad hoc basis as the North West Cultural Forum.	11,500
Waterside Feasibility Report	The project will allow an assessment to be made for the development of a Community Cultural Hub and Interpretive Centre.	4,850
North West Grant Programme	This programme provided funding for Talent North West 2016 (£50k) and Future Artist Maker Labs (£50k).	100,000
North West Community Cultural Strategies	To provide funding for cultural activity across 6 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in the North West.	137,029
Strabane Community Cultural Activity	To provide funding for cultural activity in the Strabane Neighbourhood Renewal Area.	15,971
Nerve Moving Image Centre	Funding to carry out necessary development work to progress the Moving Image Centre, Ebrington project	20,000
Walled City Tattoo	Contribution to costs associated with hosting a Walled City Tattoo event in May 2016.	30,000
Divided by History, United By Music Project	Contribution to costs associated with hosting an event in partnership with the North West Cultural Forum commemorating the two major events of 1916, the Battle of The Somme and the Easter Rising	50,000
International School for Peace Studies	Carry out necessary development work to progress the Proposed Community Hub at Ebrington project	20,000
Purchase of Hawkin Street and Great James Street	Development work relating to the purchase of the two buildings.	15,000
Stendhal Festival of Art	A contribution to costs associated with hosting the 2016 Stendhal Festival of Art.	20,000

Project	Detail	(£,000)
Music City / Celtronic	A contribution to costs associated with hosting the Music City and Celtronic Festivals in 2016.	40,000
	Total	474,350

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. (AQW 55071/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information you have asked for is set out in the attached table.

The Department is required only to maintain financial records for the previous 7 years and this constraint is reflected in the information provided in the answer table.

Year	Funder	Name / Nature of Project	Amount of Matched Funding	Amount of Unmatched Funding	Awarded to
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Building Peace through the Arts - Reimaging Communities.	£13,000	£0	Strabane district Council

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the redevelopment of Strabane Leisure Centre. (AQW 55144/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The redevelopment of Strabane Leisure Centres would in the first instance be a matter for Derry City and Strabane District Council.

I can advise that neither my Department nor Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, have been approached regarding a programme to redevelop either the Melvin Sports Centre Complex or the Riversdale Leisure Centre in Strabane.

Department of Education

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail what development plans have been published for Newtownabbey Community High School. (AQW 54070/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Three inter-linked Development Proposals (278, 279 and 280) were published on 15th October 2013 by the former North Eastern Education and Library Board. These proposed the amalgamation of Newtownabbey Community High School and Monkstown Community School through the discontinuance of both and the establishment of a new controlled post-primary school in their place. I approved these proposals in March 2014.

Both Newtownabbey Community High School and Monkstown Community College closed in August 2015 and the new Abbey Community College opened in September 2015.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children (i) currently in receipt of a nursery school place; and (ii) that were unsuccessful in securing a place. (AQW 54330/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: On the date of the 2015 school census there were 23,904 children in pre-school places across both the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

At the end of Stage 2 of the admissions process there were 39 children, whose parents had stayed with the process at the end of Stage 2, who had not yet received the offer of a funded pre-school place. However, children continued to be placed after the end of Stage 2.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what guidance is given to schools on (a) daily school starting times; and (b) the duration of the school day. (AQW 54404/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: As stated in my reply to AQW 54403/11-16, all schools have the flexibility to set their own starting and finishing times. In determining these times, all schools must take account of the legislation which sets out the required minimum number of hours under instruction for pupils and some schools will also need to take account of the availability of transport.

Schools were reminded about the number of days that they should be open to pupils and the minimum hours under instruction required on these days by way of DE Circular 2013/09 which issued on 11 April 2013.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of people (a) applying for; and (b) appointed to, temporary and permanent posts in his Department in each of the last two years, broken down by community background.

(AQW 54518/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: All appointments to and within the NICS are made on the basis of merit. Diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity are central to the merit principle and are embraced fully during the selection processes.

The detailed response is set out in the table below.

DE - applicants and appointees 2014 and 2015

2014	Protestant		Catholic		Not Determined		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Appointees 2014	25	53.2	22	46.8	0	0.0	47	100.0
Applicants 2013	109	59.6	69	37.7	5	2.7	183	100.0
Applicants 2014	159	58.2	104	38.1	10	3.7	273	100.0

2015	Protestant		Catholic		Not Determined		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Appointees 2015	Not provided due to small numbers						8	100.0
Applicants 2013	55	47.0	53	45.3	9	7.7	117	100.0
Applicants 2014	49	45.0	49	45.0	11	10.1	109	100.0

Notes:

Applicant figures in each table relate to those competitions from which appointments were made in the particular year. This means applications may have been made in a previous year.

For appointments made during 2014 and 2015, all applications were made in 2013 or 2014.

The information relating to internal temporary promotions has not been included in the answer because it is not readily available in the format requested and an exercise to produce it could only be carried out at disproportionate cost.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of the administration costs for the (i) Education and Library Boards in 2014-2015; and (ii) Education Authority in (a) 2015-2016; and (b) the projected costs for 2016-2017.

(AQW 54558/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides a breakdown of the administration costs for the Education and Library Boards in 2014-15, the Education Authority in 2015-16 and projected administration costs for the Education Authority in 2016-17:

	£'000 2014-15	£'000 2015-16	£'000 2016-17
ELBs & Staff Commission / Education Authority Administration Costs	40,464	39,534	36,212

Please note that from 1 April 2015 the Education and Library Boards and its Staff Commission were amalgamated in the new Education Authority. Education Authority administration costs for 2015-16 and 2016-17 are projected and are therefore subject to change.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 53221/11-16, whether he will publish the business case.
(AQW 54625/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The business case for the payment of accrued holiday pay for part time music tutors, prepared and submitted by the Education Authority (EA), has been approved by DFP. I have asked the Education Authority to consider publishing the final business case on its website.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 53221/11-16, to detail the amount owed to music tutors broken down by Education Authority area.

(AQW 54626/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The amount owed to music tutors broken down by former Education and Library Board area is provided below:

Belfast	North Eastern	South Eastern	Southern	Western
Nil	£27,076	£125,862	£265,278	£100,639

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Education to detail the capital investment his Department has overseen in schools in West Belfast since 2007, broken down by (i) new build capital; and (ii) any other capital investment.

(AQW 54669/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below provides the information you requested. However the information can only be provided from the 2008/09 financial year as my Department does not hold information in this format prior to this period.

Capital Investment broken down by Financial Year, New Build Capital & any other Capital Expenditure

Type of capital	2008/09 £s	2009/10 £s	2010/11 £s	2011/12 £s	2012/13 £s	2013/14 £s	2014/15 £s	Total £s
New Build	5,393,772	7,048,158	4,600,864	1,778,900	683,822	2,981,651	294,270	22,781,437
Any other Capital	2,396,968	3,182,508	3,094,781	3,163,734	5,370,040	4,470,079	6,841,237	28,519,347
Overall Total	7,790,740	10,230,666	7,695,645	4,942,634	6,053,862	7,451,730	7,135,507	51,300,784

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) teacher led; and (ii) non-teacher led nursery places in South Down.

(AQW 54755/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Education Programme is delivered in teacher led and non teacher led settings; all follow common curriculum guidelines and are subject to the same education inspection standards.

At the date of the 2015 October census², there were 725 teacher led and 695 non-teacher led pre-school places in South Down.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children with Special Education Needs Statements for autism, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 54781/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and whose primary SEN need is recorded as autism on the DENI school census, broken down by constituency of the school:

	Total
Belfast East	114
Belfast North	198
Belfast South	240
Belfast West	139
East Antrim	61
East Derry	88
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	185
Foyle	157
Lagan Valley	250
Mid Ulster	154
Newry and Armagh	188
North Antrim	67
North Down	116
South Antrim	62
South Down	233

² Provisional census figures.

	Total
Strangford	105
Upper Bann	149
West Tyrone	143
Total	2649

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Figures include funded children in voluntary and private preschools, nursery schools, primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
- 2 Figures include pupils at stage 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- 3 Data refers to primary need recorded only.
- 4 Constituency relates to the constituency in which the school the pupil attends is located.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) teacher led; and (ii) non-teacher led nursery places in North Down.

(AQW 54804/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Education Programme is delivered in teacher led and non teacher led settings; all follow common curriculum guidelines and are subject to the same education inspection standards.

At the date of the 2015 October census³, there were 655 teacher led and 348 non-teacher led pre-school places in North Down.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail how many meetings he has had with the (i) CCEA; (ii) OCR; and (iii) AQA in the last six months.

(AQW 54805/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In the last six months I have had four meetings with CCEA. I have not met with OCR or AQA during this period, but I am scheduled to meet with AQA on Monday 14 March 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education how his Department is supporting children from areas of greater deprivation and lower socio-economic backgrounds to ensure that they can read well when they leave primary education.

(AQW 54836/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: 'Count, Read: Succeed', the literacy and numeracy strategy, aims to raise attainment levels in both literacy and numeracy and narrow the gap in educational outcomes.

Effective intervention must be available to pupils in their early years, when they develop the foundations for literacy. This is reflected in both 'Count, Read: Succeed' and in the Learning to Learn framework.

Early years education in the form of Sure Start and the Pre-School Education Programme offer essential age and stage appropriate services which contribute directly to children achieving their full potential. The importance of providing effective speech and language support from an early age is one of the six core elements of the Sure Start programme and the Department provides specific funding within the programme to support delivery of speech and language services. Provision of speech and language support is also an essential component of the Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds.

The Extended Schools programme provides additional resources to over 500 schools to support the drive to maximize learning and achievement for those children and young people most in need or at risk of low educational achievement. Extended Services funding is available to eligible non-statutory pre-school education settings and targets those children in the most deprived areas and is aimed at helping the social, emotional, communication and language skills of young children.

In primary schools, the Delivering Social Change (DSC) Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme provided an additional teaching resource to 151 primary schools in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years and a Legacy Programme will ensure that the best practice and learning developed through the Programme can be disseminated across all schools. Support for literacy provision was also the focus the SEN Literacy Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Project which I funded from 2012/13 to 2014/15 and the current Literacy and Numeracy Key Stage 2/3 CPD project.

Parents also have an important role to play in their child's early education; this is a focus of my Education Works campaign. In addition, as part of the Delivering Social Change agenda, the Department has been working with the DHSSPS on the Early Intervention Transformation Programme that seeks to equip, support and empower parents to provide their children with the best start in life.

3 Provisional census figures.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils attending Education Other Than A School settings in the former Belfast Education and Library Board area and now the Education Authority Belfast Region in (a) 2013-2014; (b) 2014-2015; and (c) 2015-2016, broken down by (i) Education Other Than A School provision; and (ii) academic year.

(AQW 54839/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides details of the number of pupils in each of the Belfast Region's Education Other than At Schools provision for the years 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 to date.

Name of AEP Provision	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016 (Feb 16)
Loughshore Education Resource Centre	81	87	76
Newstart Education Centre	11	12	10
Conway Education Centre	8	10	10
Belfast Hospital School (including TOPS)	76	85	61
Pathways Project	36	35	35
Glenmona Resource Centre	18	18	12
Total	230	247	204

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department's strategy for dealing with school sites in Omagh that are due to become vacant on or before 30 June 2019.

(AQW 54842/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Five post-primary schools within Omagh (Christian Brothers Grammar, Loreto Grammar, Omagh Academy Grammar, Omagh High School and Sacred Heart College) will move to the Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC), Omagh for campus opening in September 2020. Arvalee School and Resource Centre will move to the SSEC in September 2016. The sites for these schools will become vacant on or before June 2020 in line with the overarching SSEC programme timescales.

I am aware that, given the scale and centrality of five of the sites within Omagh town, key stakeholders have noted that the disposal and potential future use of the sites will be of strategic importance to the town.

Ownership arrangements for the sites vary, with three sites within the ownership of the Education Authority and three owned by individual Trustee organisations.

I fully recognise, therefore, that decisions on the disposal of the sites are ultimately a matter for the relevant school authority.

Reflecting recent discussions with the school authorities and other key stakeholders, however, I am pleased to advise that the Department is considering how site owners may be supported in planning for and managing the future use and/or disposal of the sites.

The aim is to ensure that this is undertaken in a manner which seeks to identify opportunities, maximise benefits and limit potential negative impacts for key stakeholders and for the town of Omagh.

The Department's role in this regard, therefore, will be to facilitate and support the key stakeholders through this process.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to detail how much his Department has invested in Carrickmore Youth Centre since 2011.

(AQW 54843/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Please find below a table of investment for Carrickmore Youth Centre since 2011.

Years	Budget £	Maintenance £	Capital £	Irish Medium £	Total £
2010/2011	84,966	5,145	6,483	1,330	97,924
2011/2012	90,533	5,893	39,808	1,305	137,539
2012/2013	92,246	8,189	21,607	-	122,042
2013/2014	93,928	4,856	208,663	-	307,447
2014/2015	93,668	3,100	244,547	-	341,315
2015/2016	91,025	8,978	645	-	100,648
Total	546,366	36,161	521,753	2,635	1,106,915

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what protocols exist that require him to be invited to events such as sod-cutting ceremonies for new school buildings.

(AQW 54857/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There is currently no protocol that requires me to be invited to events however I am delighted to attend, on these occasions, diary permitting.

In this current mandate I have been pleased to announce Major Capital schemes with an investment totalling circa £565m. I am always more than happy to visit the schools and to be able to see, at first hand, the construction commencing for a new build and later the new school opening for pupils and staff.

There has been no instruction issued to the Education Authority in respect of obtaining invitations for events such as sod cutting. My Department, however, funds the Major Capital works projects and therefore there is a reasonable expectation that, as Minister of Education, I am invited to these events. I am delighted to receive invitations from schools to attend sod cuttings, openings and other such events.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education why the Regional Managing Director of the Southern and South Eastern Education Authority Regions

advised Armstrong Primary School, Armagh that it was obliged to invite the Minister to the sod-cutting ceremony for the new school buildings.

(AQW 54858/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In January 2013 I announced the establishment of a new School Enhancement Programme (SEP) which makes funding of up to £4 million available for the refurbishment and extension of existing schools deemed sustainable under area planning. This was a personal initiative brought forward by me to address a gap which I saw in the previous programme for capital and minor works. Since its inception I have taken a very personal interest in the development of the SEP programme and have performed the majority of sod cuttings for the projects funded under the scheme.

The work to be undertaken at Armstrong Primary School which falls under the School Enhancement programme (SEP) is valued at £2,450k and will allow for an extension, refurbishment and M & E works to be carried out to enable the school to meet Handbook standards.

As my Department funds the School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects there is a reasonable expectation that, as Minister of Education, I am invited to visit projects on site. I am delighted to receive invitations from schools to attend sod cuttings, openings and other such events.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what instructions have been issued to the Education Authority in respect of obtaining invitations for him to attend events such as sod-cutting ceremonies for new school buildings.

(AQW 54859/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There is currently no protocol that requires me to be invited to events however I am delighted to attend, on these occasions, diary permitting.

In this current mandate I have been pleased to announce Major Capital schemes with an investment totalling circa £565m. I am always more than happy to visit the schools and to be able to see, at first hand, the construction commencing for a new build and later the new school opening for pupils and staff.

There has been no instruction issued to the Education Authority in respect of obtaining invitations for events such as sod cutting. My Department, however, funds the Major Capital works projects and therefore there is a reasonable expectation that, as Minister of Education, I am invited to these events. I am delighted to receive invitations from schools to attend sod cuttings, openings and other such events.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of students from the traveller background that achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C, in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 54992/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The answer is contained in the following table.

Number of Irish Traveller school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, 2009/10 to 2013/14

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Irish Travellers achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C	*	*	*	*	5

Source: School Leavers Survey

Notes:

- 1 Excludes special and independent schools
- 2 Includes equivalent qualifications.

3 ‘**’ denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail the written protocols and procedures to be followed by his Department and the Education Authority to ensure the precautionary suspensions of teachers are not protracted or unlawful.

(AQW 55003/11-16)

Mr O’Dowd: The Department of Education does not employ teachers, and as such is not directly involved in employment matters, including the precautionary suspension of teachers. Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting.

Written protocols and procedures which apply to precautionary suspensions are:-

- i TNC 2007/5 - Disciplinary Procedure for Teachers, which should be read in conjunction with TNC 2008/4 - Notes of Guidance;
- ii. TNC 2009/11 - Policy and Procedure to combat Bullying and Harassment of Teachers including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant Aided Schools;
- iii. DE Circular 2015/13 - Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff, and
- iv. TNC 2013/1 – Termination of Employment of Teachers on the Grounds of Ill Health or Capability.

These protocols and procedures apply to all grant-aided schools within all sectors.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail what support his Department has given to teachers that have suffered the detrimental effects of unlawful precautionary suspensions.

(AQW 55005/11-16)

Mr O’Dowd: The Department of Education does not employ teachers, and as such is not directly involved in employment matters, including the precautionary suspension of teachers. Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting.

The BoG, as the employer, is responsible for the provision of support to teachers in relation to precautionary suspension.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail how he plans to ensure Boards of Governors act in a teacher’s best interest in circumstances where they may have acted unlawfully in enacting suspensions.

(AQW 55006/11-16)

Mr O’Dowd: When dealing with the suspension of a member of staff, school Boards of Governors are expected to abide by the appropriate Departmental or Teacher Negotiating Committee procedures, which have been agreed by those representing both employers and employees.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department’s planned investment in the schools estate in East Derry.
(AQW 55019/11-16)

Mr O’Dowd: In June 2012 I announced 18 projects, one of which was Rossmar School, Limavady. There is a business case approved for £9.2m and it is anticipated that this project will commence construction by the end of 2016.

In January 2013 the amalgamation of Listress, Craigbrack and Mullabuoy Primary schools was identified as one of the 22 projects to be taken forward in planning. The business case has been approved for £2.7m however it is anticipated that this project will not progress to site stage until 2017.

I announced 16 capital projects in June 2014 that included Roe Valley Integrated Primary school. This project is in the very early stages of planning therefore it is difficult to provide a timescale for the start of construction.

A shared campus for Limavady High School and St Mary’s HS, Limavady was announced in July 2014 but is at an early stage of planning and therefore I cannot currently provide a timescale when it will move to site.

Progression to the construction phase for all projects is dependent on the availability of funding at that stage.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Foyle College and Ebrington Primary School new builds in Londonderry.

(AQW 55024/11-16)

Mr O’Dowd: Site works commenced in July 2015 for this project at a total cost of circa £31.5m. Work is progressing well and it is anticipated that the first phase including Ebrington Primary School and the energy centre will be completed in February 2017. The overall project commenced in October 2015 with an estimated completion date for Foyle College of October 2018.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the refurbishment of Newbuildings Primary School, Londonderry.

(AQW 55025/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The development work planned under the School Enhancement Programme (SEP) at Newbuildings Primary School, valued at over £1.4m, is being taken forward by the Education Authority (EA). The proposed scheme involves the refurbishment of the existing building to address under provision of teaching space. In addition the multi-purpose hall will be extended and a range of refurbishments will be carried out throughout the school.

The SEP Project at Newbuildings Primary School commenced on site in April 2015 and is progressing well on site, with early phases of the work already handed over to the school. It is anticipated that works will be completed by November 2016.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the proposed level of sustainable enrolments recommended in point 4.2.6 of Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future. Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Post-Primary Education.

(AQW 55029/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department's published response to each of the Report's recommendations is available at:

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/response-to-the-recommendations-of-advisory-group-on-post-primary-irish-medium-education.pdf> .

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education which of the 33 recommendations contained in the Ministerial Advisory Group's October 2014 Report titled Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future. Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Post-Primary Education, have not been accepted.

(AQW 55030/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department's published response to each of the Report's recommendations is available at:

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/response-to-the-recommendations-of-advisory-group-on-post-primary-irish-medium-education.pdf> .

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many pupils have enrolled at Coláiste Dhoire post-primary school in Dungiven.

(AQW 55053/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: According to the 2015/16 School Census, 15 pupils are enrolled at Gaelcholáiste Dhoire.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action is being taken to implement the recommendations of the Report on Department of Education: Sustainability of Schools by the Public Accounts Committee.

(AQW 55074/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Report on the Sustainability of Schools was published on 2 March 2016 and my officials are currently considering the recommendations. Protocol requires that my Department responds to the Report through a Memorandum of Reply which my officials are currently preparing, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel and Personnel. This will be laid in the Assembly following the elections in May.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to ask what measures his Department is taking to ensure the data used in assessing the maximum enrolment capacity for schools is accurate.

(AQW 55075/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: A school's approved enrolment figure is set by the Department of Education (DE) on an annual basis following consultation with the school on the proposed number. Should any school believe it is unable to effectively deliver the curriculum within its existing accommodation, it has the opportunity to bring this to DE's attention and discuss options with the relevant managing authority.

DE has accepted a recommendation in the June 2015 report from the Audit Office (NIAO) on Sustainability of Schools to assess the capacity of every school. This is a complex and resource intensive project which will be taken forward in phases and is currently being scoped to assess current up to date information held by the Education Authority and DE. The initial focus will be on the primary school sector as this is the sector with the most schools showing variation between approved and actual enrolment figures.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education what is the rationale for the Education Authority's decision to implement a regional policy of part-time only provision for special educational needs nursery placements from 2016-17; and how this was explained to schools and families impacted by the decision.

(AQW 55109/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I have asked the Education Authority to urgently revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision for children placed in special schools.

Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, I have called on the EA to provide me with assurances that there has been full and open engagement with those most directly affected by

any decision on pre-school provision in special schools and that they have been listened to. I have also emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education when the report on the review of home to school transport will be published. (AQW 55110/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Report of the Independent Review of Home to School Transport was published on 12 December 2014.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education how many staff grievances have been lodged with the General Teaching Council, in each year since 2012.

(AQW 55123/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council has advised that the number of staff grievances lodged since 2012 is as follows:

■ 2012	none
■ 2013	none
■ 2014	3
■ 2015	1
■ 2016	none

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for St Columbanus' College, Bangor.

(AQW 55125/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: St Columbanus' College has not been included in any of my capital announcements to date due to area planning considerations. On 18 February 2015, I approved a Development Proposal to increase the approved enrolment at the school 500 to 750 on a phased basis by 2025, permitting an increase in admissions number from 90 to 115 pupils with effect from 31 August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter. Any outstanding area planning issues are now resolved.

Major capital investment for the school remains a strategic priority for CCMS and it has stated that St Columbanus' College will be submitted for consideration should a future call for potential major capital projects be made.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on progress on the new build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School.

(AQW 55126/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Bangor Central Integrated Primary School (IPS) was considered under the protocol developed to select projects to proceed in planning in 2014 but did not achieve sufficient priority to be included in the list of schools that I announced at that time. The Education Authority, as Managing Authority for Bangor Central IPS, has recently submitted projects for consideration as part of a possible future major capital announcement. Bangor Central Primary School was not one of the projects brought forward.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education where the extra £33m in his 2016-17 budget will be spent.

(AQW 55143/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In comparison to the 2015-16 opening resource budget baseline of £1,914.2m, it would appear that the 2016-17 resource budget has increased by £33.3m to £1,947.5m, however this is not a like for like comparison.

The 2015-16 opening Resource Budget was subsequently increased, at 2015-16 June Monitoring, to include an increase in funding of £34.7m, which I secured for additional employer pension costs. This brought the 2015-16 revised opening position to £1,948.9m.

As part of the Budget 2016-17 process, the Department's Resource Budget was reduced by 5.7% or £110.5m which was offset by the allocation of £40.0m, which I secured as part of the Budget 2016-17 negotiations. A further adjustment of £1.6m was made to deduct the funding for PEACE IV and the 2015-16 Change Fund allocation for Nurture Units and add the Departmental Restructuring transfer.

An allocation of £70.7m was also received from the Public Sector Transformation Fund for teaching and non-teaching Voluntary Exit Schemes (VES) and the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme. The breakdown of this funding is as follows:

■ VES – Non-teaching	£23.4m
■ VES – Teaching	£14.2m
■ Investing in the Workforce Scheme	£33.1m

This funding can only be used to fund specific outputs as agreed by the Executive and cannot be used to fund general Education expenditure.

Overall, on a like for like basis with 2015-16, the Budget 2016-17 Resource allocation for Education means a net cash reduction of £72.1m or (3.8%).

However, although the Budget 2016-17 Resource outcome is challenging, the position for Education is significantly better than previously anticipated.

I also welcome the announcement on 10 February 2016, by the Finance Minister, of an additional allocation of £20m for Education in 2016-17. This will be allocated to my Department as part of the June 2016-17 Monitoring Round and will help address pressures on the Aggregated Schools Budget and Special Education Needs.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for the Hollywood multi-schools project.
(AQW 55164/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Due to a number of factors, including sustainability and area planning considerations, the Hollywood Multi Schools Project has not been included in any of my announcements to date for new major capital builds. I can confirm that these area planning issues are now resolved. If there should be a future call for potential major capital projects then it could be considered at that time.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the total amount of money sought by applicants to the new Early Years Pathway Fund.

(AQW 55204/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (which administers the Pathway Fund on behalf of DE) advises that the total amount of funding requested by applicants to the Fund is £5,322,630.48.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail how many applications were made to the new Early Years Pathway Fund.
(AQW 55206/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (which administers the Pathway Fund on behalf of DE) advises that a total of 283 applications have been received for the Pathway Fund.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to increase capacity at Omagh Integrated Primary School.
(AQW 55242/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Any significant change in the character or size of a school is governed by the statutory Development Proposal (DP) process. As a Grant Maintained Integrated school, it is for the school's Board of Governors to bring forward any proposals.

There is currently no DP for Omagh Integrated Primary School.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether all looked after children, including those in Education Other Than At School projects, have personal education plans in place, in line with his Department's guidance.

(AQW 55248/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: According to the 2015/16 census figures collected by my Department, 1,166* in care pupils out of 2,095* have a Personal Education Plan in place.

These figures include primary (including reception, nursery and years 1-7 pupils), post-primary and special school pupils. It includes the vast majority of EOTAS pupils, but not those that no longer have a link to a mainstream school.

*Please note that these figures are not validated by the Department.

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail a timeframe for the implementation of the Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme.

(AQW 55256/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The overall aim of the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme is to refresh the teaching workforce, by providing teachers aged 55+ with the opportunity to leave the profession, creating job opportunities for those recently qualified teachers who have had the greatest difficulty in securing meaningful employment.

In each of the last five years there have been in the region of 500 full time job opportunities for teachers. However, for these job opportunities, teachers who have qualified in recent years have the least chance of gaining employment as they are often sifted out when short listing criteria is applied based on experience.

There have been calls for the Scheme to be opened up to all teachers without a permanent post. Opening up this Scheme to any teacher without a permanent post will not refresh the workforce; will not provide job opportunities to those who face the greatest barriers to gaining a permanent teaching post; and will not save public money as required under the agreement which secured funding of £33 million from the Executive.

In considering these views, and exploring options for criteria for the Scheme, I have submitted a paper to my Executive colleagues outlining several options on the way forward.

It was my intention to launch the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme in early Spring, however, the Scheme and its future is now in the hands of the Executive.

Department for Employment and Learning

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the number of university graduates in Northern Ireland comparative to other areas of the United Kingdom; and what plans there are to increase the number of graduates.

(AQW 53816/11-16)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The table below shows that Northern Ireland produces significantly fewer university graduates, relative to population, than any other part of the UK.

Table 1 - Qualifications gained at UK HEIs as a proportion of the population by location of institution - 2014/15

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	Total
Qualifications gained	616,420	16,010	71,175	41,400	745,005
Population (mid 2014)	54,316,600	1,840,500	5,347,600	3,092,000	64,596,800
Proportion gaining qualifications	1.1%	0.9%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%
Qualifications per 1000 population	11.3	8.7	13.3	13.4	11.5

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Annual Mid-Year Population Estimates for the UK, Office for the National Statistics, 2015

The recently published skills barometer demonstrates clear evidence of a need to increase the supply of graduates in our workforce, particularly as we prepare for a lower rate of corporation tax from 2018 onwards. My Department has already taken some action to address this through targeted support for an additional 1,419 undergraduate places in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects between 2012 and 2015, and funding for an additional 234 PhD places in economically relevant subjects since 2012.

In addition to enhancing traditional forms of higher education provision, we have sought to develop a more diverse range of pathways for gaining higher level qualifications in Northern Ireland, in particular through our new system for apprenticeships. A range of higher level apprenticeship pilots are already in operation and additional pilots are being tested this year in advance of the full rollout of the new system. In a similar vein, we have been exploring opportunities to improve access to part-time and postgraduate study through the student finance system, and I intend to announce my plans in these areas in the near future.

However, any expansion ambitions we have are going to be seriously curtailed until we find a sustainable funding solution for our higher education sector. Our local universities are already significantly underfunded compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the UK, and further reductions of some £16 million this year have both compounded this funding gap and had a direct impact on their intakes of full-time undergraduate students.

Last year my Department initiated a public engagement process, called the Big Conversation, to raise awareness of, and seek solutions to, these issues. My Department intends to publish a response to that process in the coming weeks, outlining the various options available to us to secure a sustainable funding model for higher education and support the scale of growth which our economy requires. Those options will need to be considered in the context of the next Comprehensive Spending Review period.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he is addressing the issue of agency staff being used as support workers, given the inconsistency and distress this is causing young people with disabilities or other support needs.
(AQW 54513/11-16)

Dr Farry: My Department provides £4.5 million per annum in ring-fenced funding to further education (FE) colleges through the Additional Support Fund to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This funding helps to cover the cost of both technical support, such as IT adaptations and specialist software, as well as personal support including specialist tutors and classroom assistants. It also facilitates the provision of discrete classes with higher staff to student ratios and more intensive support for students who, by nature of their learning difficulty and/or disability, are unable to access mainstream provision.

FE colleges are employers in their own right with responsibility for all employment matters such as recruitment and deployment, including those who provide the additional support needed for students with disabilities.

Higher education institutions are autonomous and responsible for their own policies and procedures, including those relating to the employment of support workers.

You may wish to contact the institutions directly regarding the issue to which you refer.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the areas of his current budget set aside to deal with drug and alcohol abuse in colleges and universities.

(AQW 54644/11-16)

Dr Farry:

Further Education

The department does not provide specific funding to the FE colleges for dealing with drug and alcohol abuse. Therefore you may wish to contact the colleges directly in respect of this:

- Belfast Metropolitan College Director mmcgivern@belfastmet.ac.uk
- Northern Regional College Director terri.scott@nrc.ac.uk
- North West Regional College Director leo.murphy@nwrc.ac.uk
- South Eastern Regional College Director ken.webb@serc.ac.uk
- Southern Regional College Director doranb@src.ac.uk
- South West College Director malachy.mcaleer@swc.ac.uk

Higher Education

The Department provides funding to the universities for the provision of teaching and research and therefore no budget is set aside to deal with drug or alcohol abuse. The universities are autonomous institutions and how they direct any other resources will be up to the universities themselves. Therefore you may wish to contact the institutions directly for further information:

- Queen's University vc.office@qub.ac.uk
- Ulster University vice-chancellor@ulster.ac.uk
- Open University john.addy@open.ac.uk
- St Mary's University College p.finn@stmarys-belfast.ac.uk
- Stranmillis University College principal@stran.ac.uk

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many teachers or lecturers, who do not hold a teaching qualification, are delivering courses in further educational colleges.

(AQW 54677/11-16)

Dr Farry: My Department sets down the minimum qualification requirements for lecturers in the further education sector in Northern Ireland and these are outlined in two circulars. Colleges must comply with the requirements specified within each circular and employers have the discretion to enhance the requirements set out in the circulars beyond the minimum.

Circular FE 01/12 outlines the minimum qualifications required for permanent lecturers, and circular ES 01/12 provides guidance on the minimum qualifications standards for Essential Skills lecturers and tutors.

The circulars are available at the following link <https://www.delni.gov.uk/topics/further-education/qualifications-required-teach-further-education>

All newly appointed permanent further education lecturers who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification or who are not currently registered with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland are required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (Further Education) within three years of appointment.

Excellence and embedding high quality teaching, is a key theme and policy commitment in the Further Education Means Success strategy. This will examine the development of a new teacher education framework with a renewed focus on high quality initial teacher education and continual professional development for all lecturing staff.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of people in South Down enrolled in employer-led apprenticeships in each of the last three years, broken down by apprenticeship type.

(AQW 54754/11-16)

Dr Farry: As of October 2015, the total occupancy in the ApprenticeshipsNI programme across all occupational frameworks for residents of South Down was 449. Programme occupancy, broken down by framework and level, is included at Table 1.

The number of starts on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, from South Down, by level and framework; from 2012/13 - 2014/15 is included at Table 2.

The latest full ApprenticeshipsNI Statistical Bulletin can be found by following the link below.

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/AppsNI%20Bulletin%20Feb%202016.pdf>

In addition to ApprenticeshipsNI provision, in Southern Regional College 188 apprentices are currently participating in level 3 apprenticeship pilot programmes and 37 apprentices are participating in higher level apprenticeship pilot programmes.

The number of related starts, from South Down, by level and occupational area; from 2012/13 - 2014/15, is included at Table 3.

In South Eastern Regional College 96 apprentices are currently participating in level 3 apprenticeship pilot programmes and three apprentices are participating in higher level apprenticeship pilot programmes.

The number of related starts, from South Down, by level and occupational area; from 2012/13 - 2014/15, is included at Table 4.

Table 1: Occupancy on ApprenticeshipsNI for participants from South Down, by Level and Framework, as at October 2015

	AppsLevelBulletin				
	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total
Accountancy	0	1	2	0	3
Active Leisure and Learning	0	1	1	0	2
Agriculture	1	0	2	0	3
Amenity Horticulture	0	0	1	0	1
Beauty Therapy	0	0	1	0	1
Business and Administration	0	0	8	0	8
Catering and Professional Chefs	23	0	9	0	32
Child Care, Learning and Development	1	0	10	0	11
Construction	17	0	0	0	17
Construction Crafts	0	9	21	0	30
Customer Service	5	0	2	0	7
Distribution and Warehousing	3	0	0	0	3
Electrical Distribution and Trans. Engineering	0	1	0	0	1
Electrical Power Engineering	1	0	0	0	1
Electrotechnical	0	55	23	0	78
Engineering	5	9	4	0	18
Food Manufacture	24	0	7	0	31
Furniture Production	0	0	1	0	1
Hairdressing	13	0	25	0	38
Health and Social Care	8	0	11	0	19
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	1	0	2	0	3
Hospitality	21	1	13	0	35
Insurance	7	0	0	0	7
IT and Telecoms Professional	4	0	0	0	4
Land Based Service Engineering	4	0	0	0	4
Light Vehicle Body and Paint Operations	0	0	3	0	3
Management	0	0	3	0	3
MES Plumbing	5	3	12	0	20
Print Production	0	0	1	0	1
Providing Mortgage Advice	0	1	0	0	1
Retail	18	0	6	0	24
Security Systems	1	0	1	0	2
Social Media & Digital Marketing	0	0	3	0	3
Vehicle Body and Paint	4	0	0	0	4
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	7	2	16	0	25
Vehicle Parts	1	0	0	0	1
Not Known	0	0	3	1	4

	AppsLevelBulletin				
	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total
Total	174	83	191	1	449

Source: Data extracted from the DEL Client Management System

Table 2: Starts on ApprenticeshipsNI for participants from South Down, by Level and Framework; 2012/13 - 2014/15

	2012/13				2013/14					2014/15				
	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Total	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total
Accountancy	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Active Leisure and Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Agriculture	2	0	5	7	7	0	4	0	11	2	0	2	0	4
Amenity Horticulture	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beauty Therapy	1	0	5	6	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	2
Business and Administration	1	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	5	1	0	3	0	4
Catering and Professional Chefs	0	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	9	15	0	7	0	22
Child Care, Learning and Development	2	0	6	8	0	1	5	0	6	2	0	2	0	4
Construction	4	0	0	4	9	0	0	0	9	13	0	0	0	13
Construction Crafts	0	0	17	17	0	0	19	0	19	0	0	20	0	20
Customer Service	10	0	2	12	11	1	2	0	14	2	0	2	0	4
Distribution and Warehousing	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2
Electrical Distribution and Trans. Engineering	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Power Engineering	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Electrotechnical	0	3	4	7	0	11	12	0	23	0	24	8	0	32
Engineering	3	0	3	6	4	1	1	0	6	3	5	0	0	8
Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Food Manufacture	4	0	1	5	6	0	2	0	8	19	0	2	0	21
Furniture Production	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hairdressing	8	0	13	21	8	0	16	0	24	13	0	17	0	30
Health and Social Care	41	2	5	48	10	0	3	0	13	6	0	6	0	12
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	2	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	2
Hospitality	0	0	0	0	30	1	17	0	48	21	0	14	0	35
Hospitality and Catering	22	0	5	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2012/13				2013/14					2014/15				
	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Total	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total	Level 2	Level 2/3	Level 3 Progression	Level not assigned	Total
Insurance	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7	4	0	1	0	5
IT and Telecoms Professional	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Laboratory Technician	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Land Based Service Engineering	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	3	4	0	1	0	5
Light Vehicle Body and Paint Operations	0	0	4	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2
Management	0	0	30	30	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	4	0	4
MES Plumbing	1	0	8	9	0	0	18	0	18	6	0	8	0	14
Motor Vehicle Industry	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Print Production	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Printing Industry	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Providing Mortgage Advice	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Retail	3	1	0	4	10	0	11	0	21	14	0	6	0	20
Security Systems	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	2
Social Media & Digital Marketing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Team Leading	24	0	0	24	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Vehicle Body and Paint	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	2
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	0	0	16	16	7	0	24	0	31	5	1	17	0	23
Vehicle Parts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Not Known	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	1	5	0	0	1	2	3
Total	138	6	127	271	131	17	159	1	308	144	30	132	2	308

Table 3: Southern Regional College – Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes

Level 3	13/14	14/15	15/16
Bench Joinery	19	28	21
Bricklaying	2	6	13
Childcare	8	7	
Construction Plant Machinery Maintenance	7	4	4
Dental Nursing (Pilot)			4
Electro technical	10	51	72
Food Manufacture	6	14	
Glass		4	
Hairdressing	0		15
Health & Social Care		1	
Heavy & Light Vehicle repair	21	21	20

Level 3	13/14	14/15	15/16
Horticulture	1	2	1
Laboratory Techniques		5	
Mechanical Engineering		7	7
Painting & Decorating	1	7	5
Plastering	1	2	1
Plumbing & Heating	19	33	18
Retail Skills	0	2	
Wall & Floor Tiling	4	4	7
Total	99	198	188

Southern Region College - Higher Level Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes

Higher Level Apprenticeship	Enrolments	
	2014/2015	2015/2016
Applied Industrial Sciences (Chemical Sciences)	9	8
Accountancy	8	17
Digital Marketing	-	12
Total	17	37

Table 4: South Eastern Regional College – Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes

Level 3	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Administration	0	0	1	1
Catering	2	2	2	6
Electrical Installation	6	4	15	25
Hairdressing	8	1	6	15
Health & Social Care	0	1	0	1
Hospitality	0	4	0	4
Land Based Technology	0	0	1	1
Mechanical Engineering	0	0	3	3
Motor Vehicle	9	9	4	22
Plant Maintenance	2	0	0	2
Plumbing	4	3	1	8
Refrigeration	1	0	0	1
Wood Occupations	4	2	1	7
Total	36	26	34	96

South Eastern Regional College - Higher Level Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes

South Eastern Regional College is currently piloting four Higher Level Apprenticeships, three in Lisburn Campus and one in Newtownards Campus. Of those enrolled in these programmes, the following numbers of apprentices reside in South Down.

	2015/16
Accountancy	1
Mechatronics Engineering	1
Automotive Management	1
Building Service Gas Management	0

	2015/16
Total	3

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what teaching qualification requirements apply to lecturers in further education colleges or universities.

(AQW 54766/11-16)

Dr Farry: The Further Education Teachers' (Eligibility) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 127), as amended, require that every person employed as a Further Education (FE) lecturer must have such qualifications which are approved by the Department for Employment and Learning.

My Department sets down the minimum qualification requirements for lecturers in the FE sector in Northern Ireland and these are outlined in two circulars. Colleges must comply with the requirements specified within each circular and employers have the discretion to enhance the requirements set out in the circulars beyond the minimum.

Circular FE 01/12 outlines the minimum qualifications required for permanent lecturers, and circular ES 01/12 provides guidance on the minimum qualifications standards for Essential Skills lecturers and tutors.

The circulars are available at the following link <https://www.delni.gov.uk/topics/further-education/qualifications-required-teach-further-education>

Excellence and embedding high quality teaching, is a key theme and policy commitment in the Further Education Means Success strategy. This will examine the development of a new teacher education framework with a renewed focus on high quality initial teacher education and continual professional development for all lecturing staff.

In relation to the university sector, there is no statutory requirement to have a formal teaching qualification as an academic in Northern Ireland. However, there is usually an expectation that an early career academic should have a primary honours degree (1st Class or 2:1 classification) and a higher degree. Many individual disciplines will also usually require a PhD.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any potential centres of excellence which may be located at the expanded Ulster University Magee campus.

(AQW 54848/11-16)

Dr Farry: Ulster University is an autonomous institution responsible for its own policies and procedures, including those relating to the location and provision of teaching and research.

You may wish to contact the University directly for details regarding the delivery of its services.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what structures exist between the Dark Hedges Preservation Trust and his Department to advance and promote this asset.

(AQW 54576/11-16)

Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): There are no direct structures between the Department and the Dark Hedges Preservation Trust; however, both of the Department's tourism bodies are capitalising on the global success of the hit TV series Game of Thrones, which features the Dark Hedges.

The Dark Hedges have underpinned Tourism NI's Game of Thrones marketing activity, being incorporated into a number of blogs and social media posts, with further activity planned during the first quarter of 2016/17.

They have also featured in a number of Tourism NI's advertising campaigns and photography of the hedges has been used as the backdrop and literature for a number of Tourism NI's corporate events.

Attendance by Tourism NI at consumer shows and shopping centre promotions in the Republic of Ireland market also offer excellent promotional opportunities for The Dark Hedges. A filming crew from the Republic of Ireland visited the Dark Hedges in February 2016 as part of a familiarisation trip and filmed at the location for two travel programmes to be aired on Setanta, TV3 and TG4.

Tourism Ireland has rolled out two major Game of Thrones social media campaigns in partnership with broadcasting giant HBO, reaching some 100 million Game of Thrones fans around the world. A third campaign will be launched later this year, timed to coincide with Season 6 of the popular series.

The Game of Thrones campaigns drive visits to both organisations' websites, Ireland.com and

discovernorthernireland.com, which provide further information on the locations featured in Game of Thrones, including The Dark Hedges, and suggests a range of travel itineraries.

A number of Travel, Trade Familiarisation trips have taken place to the Dark Hedges with over 50 journalists visiting during the 2015/16 period.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many businesses in each constituency have attended InvestNI workshops and events in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54634/11-16)

Mr Bell: Between April 2012 and March 2015, Invest NI hosted 836 events across Northern Ireland attended by 19,903 delegates. Event delegates can register for Invest NI hosted events through its Event Management System (EMS) where the mandatory fields are: (a) first name, (b) surname, (c) email address, and (d) telephone number. The EMS does not capture details of event delegates by business name or constituency area.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much financial support his Department has provided to businesses for research and development in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54649/11-16)

Mr Bell: Table 1 below shows the amount of support that Invest NI has offered to businesses for research and development projects in each of the last five financial years.

Table 1: Invest NI R&D Assistance Offered to Businesses (2010-11 to 2014-15)

Year	Assistance £m
2010-11	21.95
2011-12	19.15
2012-13	24.61
2013-14	34.17
2014-15	34.21

In addition, Invest NI also offered support to External Delivery Organisations (EDOs) and universities to undertake research and development projects, details of which are highlighted in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Invest NI R&D Assistance Offered to EDOs / Universities (2010-11 to 2014-15)

Year	EDO/UNI's Assistance £m
2010-11	8.65
2011-12	0.82
2012-13	9.89
2013-14	31.43
2014-15	7.64

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what marketing initiatives aimed at the family tourist market in England have been undertaken over the last five years; and how much has been spent on these initiatives.

(AQW 54650/11-16)

Mr Bell: Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing Northern Ireland in the family tourist market in England.

One of their key focuses this year is highlighting touring holidays and visitor experiences which appeal to families such as the Causeway Coastal Route, Titanic Belfast, the Giant's Causeway, the National Trust properties and the Marble Arch Global Geopark.

They also highlight the many festivals and events that take place around Northern Ireland, including family-oriented festivals such as the Tall Ships Festival and the Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival in Londonderry. Last November, the organisation launched an online film, 'Halloween in Londonderry', to highlight the walled city and its spectacular Halloween festivities.

Family attractions such as the Ulster American Folk Park, Belfast Zoo, the Ulster Museum and the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, as well as the walking trails and forest parks of Northern Ireland are listed on Tourism Ireland's suite of international websites, Ireland.com, which is available in ten different language versions for over 30 individual markets around the world. Ireland.com attracts over 16.5 million unique views each year.

It is not possible to separate expenditure on the family market from the overall marketing budget.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the recently published ONS statistics which show that Northern Ireland's comparative productivity, relative to the UK average, is widening and that Northern Ireland's productivity is now amongst the lowest in the developed world.

(AQW 54652/11-16)

Mr Bell: The latest figures from ONS show that London and the Greater South East heavily distort UK productivity figures. Northern Ireland, along with eight other UK regions, has productivity below the UK average. Measured using GVA per job, Northern Ireland has the second lowest productivity across the UK, above Wales, and is marginally below four other regions. On a GVA per hour worked measure, Northern Ireland has the lowest productivity.

Whilst productivity is clearly a key challenge for Northern Ireland, it should be noted that our productivity performance is higher than 11 other members of the EU. Nonetheless, this is an area where I would expect to see a renewed emphasis on developing a refocused Economic Strategy and Programme for Government during 2016.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for a breakdown of the number of jobs (i) promoted; and (ii) created in Foyle, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 54671/11-16)

Mr Bell: It should be noted that 'jobs promoted' are those which supported businesses expect to create in future years, whereas 'Jobs created' are jobs which have actually been filled at a particular point in time, and may relate to investments secured in earlier years. It is therefore not possible to directly compare the number of jobs promoted with those that have been created during the same period.

Table 1 below details the number of jobs that Invest NI has promoted in the Foyle Parliamentary Constituency (PCA) in each of the last four financial years.

Table 1: Invest NI New Jobs Promoted in Foyle PCA

Year	Jobs Promoted
2011-12	380
2012-13	465
2013-14	868
2014-15	589

Table 2 below details the number of jobs that have been created by Invest NI supported businesses in the Foyle constituency in each of the last four financial years.

Table 2: Invest NI New Jobs Created in Foyle PCA

Year	Jobs Created
2011-12	373
2012-13	322
2013-14	437
2014-15	662

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54687/11-16)

Mr Bell:

2007-13 Sustainable Competitiveness Programme

DETI is the Managing Authority for this Programme. However, it should be noted that significant elements of the funding were administered and spent by Invest NI, Tourism NI and other Northern Ireland Government Departments.

As noted in our previous response, AQW 53916/11-16, further information about the programme can be found in the 'Achievements and Successes' brochure which has been posted in the Assembly Library and on the Successful Beneficiaries website: <http://successes.eugrants.org/>. Searches can be refined by town and relevant postcode. EU funding is detailed as "Community" funding within each of the projects.

Please note that South Belfast post codes are likely to include projects where Queens University is the lead partner and therefore both financial and economic impacts may accrue beyond South Belfast.

2014-20 Investment for Growth and Jobs programme

DETI is the Managing Authority for this Programme. However, it should be noted that more than 80% of the funding will be administered and spent by Invest NI. From 1 January 2014 to 30 September 2015 four projects with Letters of Offer totalling £1.6 million have been supported in the South Belfast area. Up until 30th September 2015, £0.57 million in expenditure has been claimed against these projects.

2007-13 Interreg IVa programme

For Interreg Programmes, the Managing Authority is the Special EU Programmes Body and DETI fulfils the Accountable Department role for relevant measures.

As above further information can found on the Successful Beneficiaries website <http://successes.eugrants.org/>.

2014-20 Interreg Va programme

DETI has not spent any monies to date on this programme as calls for projects are currently underway.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the impact of a mandatory National Living Wage, from April 2016, on operating costs for small and medium sized businesses; and what support his Department can offer businesses that may seek to cut staff numbers or working hours as a result.

(AQW 54779/11-16)

Mr Bell: The National Living Wage will be introduced in April 2016 and means that people aged 25 or over will be legally entitled to at least £7.20 per hour. This will give a pay rise of over 7% to the lowest paid in society.

Of course this does have a corresponding impact on cost for businesses. My Department will be taking forward research during 2016 looking at the most recent increase and further planned increases up to 2020 to determine the potential economic impact of the National Living Wage.

This work will help to inform whether any additional support measures over and above the wide range of support already on offer by Invest NI are required.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what financial support is available from Invest NI to small and medium enterprise start-ups which are not seeking to expand into export markets.

(AQW 54780/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest NI's financial support for start-ups is primarily for businesses which demonstrate potential to grow exports and create jobs. However, locally focussed start-ups can access funding from Invest NI under the following measures:

The NI Small Business Loan Fund is a £5 million revolving loan fund for individuals, private companies and social enterprises in the SME and micro enterprise size range based in Northern Ireland.

Innovation Vouchers are worth up to £5,000 and enable small and medium sized enterprises to engage with one of the 39 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The voucher allows businesses to access specialist skills and expertise to provide an innovative solution to a business issue that cannot be easily solved by the private sector or other support mechanisms.

In addition, the Regional Start Initiative, now delivered on behalf of local Councils by Enterprise NI, provides individuals who wish to start their own business with advice and the capability to produce their own business plan. The intention is that this business plan will provide a template for the new entrepreneur to plan and access sources of funds for the business.

Advice and guidance is also available to all businesses throughout Northern Ireland through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI, in partnership with NI Direct. Businesses can avail of a range of advisory assistance on business related topics including sales & marketing, design and finance as well as information on events.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what financial support is available to local entrepreneurs who want to start their own business and who have consulted with Invest NI to deliver a business plan.

(AQW 54799/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest NI provides financial grant support to new business start-ups with export focussed business ideas. Support is wide ranging and can focus on trade development, skills development, research, process development, intellectual property and assistance toward the costs of employing new staff.

Export and Global Start assistance is available to entrepreneurs starting an export focussed business or who have an established business seeking to enter export markets for the first time. These businesses are typically supported in areas of job creation, marketing, ICT, skills and strategy and R&D.

Innovation Vouchers of up to £5,000 are available to enable small and medium sized enterprises to engage with one of the 39 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The voucher allows businesses to access specialist skills and expertise to provide an innovative solution to a business issue that cannot be easily solved by the private sector or other support mechanisms.

The Technical Development Incentive can offer business start-ups 50% support on eligible technical supplier costs up to a maximum grant of £5,000. Areas supported include Intellectual Property (IP), investigating new technologies and processes, product and process problem resolution, product approval/global technical compliance, process and quality management schemes and improved product design and performance.

The Propel Programme helps put the structure around the company to commercialise the service or product and seek investment. Selective Financial Assistance can be used to help accelerate growth. Invest NI also provides a wide range of other assistance appropriate for the High Potential Start Up such as helping the companies with design, to train staff, protect their IP, develop their management team and strengthen their board.

Separate from grants Invest NI also provides support to startups through its Access to Finance Programmes via NI Small Business Loan Fund, Techstart NI and Co-Fund NI and equity to grow businesses can be provided by the Growth Loan Fund and Development Funds respectively.

Advice and guidance is available to all businesses throughout Northern Ireland through nibusinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI, in partnership with NI Direct. Businesses can avail of a range of advisory assistance on business related topics including sales & marketing, design and finance as well as information on events.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list the (i) completed; and (ii) pending applications from West Tyrone to the (a) Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation; and (b) Renewable Heat Incentive schemes.
(AQW 54819/11-16)

Mr Bell: Information on Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) and Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme applications in West Tyrone is set out in the table below.

Scheme	Completed/Accredited	In process
Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation	2,606	340
Domestic RHI	201	175
Non Domestic RHI	209	263

Information on NIRO and RHI accreditations has been obtained from Ofgem. Information is retained by postcode rather than by Parliamentary Constituency and is based on postcodes BT47, BT70, BT76, BT78, BT79, BT81, BT82, BT93.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what benefits a reduction in Corporation Tax will have for Omagh and Strabane.
(AQW 54820/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Executive's commitment to reduce the rate of Corporation Tax to 12.5% from 2018 covers all of Northern Ireland, including Omagh and Strabane.

This lower rate can help to support increased investment from existing businesses, both indigenous and foreign, as well as helping to attract investment that would otherwise not locate here. This will help to create additional employment opportunities and increase the level of spending taking place throughout Northern Ireland.

The latest estimates suggest that a 12.5% rate of Corporation Tax can create in excess of 30,000 jobs and deliver an economy almost 10% larger by 2033. It is not possible to apportion these benefits to any particular region.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the establishment of an agri-food marketing organisation as recommended in the Going for Growth report by the Agri-Food Strategy Board.
(AQW 54827/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is working with the Agri-Food Strategy Board (AFSB) to support the development of an industry-led, commercially focused single marketing body for the sector, based on the Scotland Food and Drink model.

My Department has been working alongside the AFSB industry members to assist their development of a business plan and business case for the body, and have commissioned support for this work through the Strategic Investment Board (SIB).

The AFSB has formed a shadow board for the new body and established a company limited by guarantee, Northern Ireland Food Marketing Association (NIFMA).

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on his Department's support for activities in East Derry in relation to the Year of Food and Drink; and to outline the benefits to local producers and businesses.
(AQW 54828/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Year of Food & Drink 2016 is an exciting initiative which presents an opportunity for us to celebrate all that is great about Northern Ireland Food and Drink.

Tourism NI is leading on this initiative and they have been actively working with industry to support and enable them to maximise the opportunities this initiative presents.

In 2015 Tourism NI co-ordinated a series of dedicated industry roadshows which took place across Northern Ireland including a dedicated Year of Food and Drink 2016 event in the Guildhall on Tuesday 29th September 2015. Further Year of Food and Drink Industry Roadshows were held in January 2016 in various locations throughout Northern Ireland including once again the Guildhall in Londonderry on Tuesday 19th January.

Tourism NI also sponsored "Taste our Best- Growing a Foodie Destination" hosted by Derry City Council on Monday 22nd February as part of Enterprise Week 2016. This was complemented by Tourism Event Funding Programme Roadshows which highlighted the new dedicated Year of Food and Drink Tourism Events Scheme and distributed the Year of Food and Drink Event Organisers Toolkit. The Year of Food and Drink Tourism Events Scheme was an open call application process and the International North West 200 2016 has received an offer of financial support of £6,000 through this scheme.

Tourism NI, in partnership with WorldHost, Food NI & People 1st, are also currently delivering a pilot WorldHost training scheme entitled 'WorldHost Sales Powered By Service' aimed specifically at the hospitality sector. The programme has a strong emphasis on being prepared for NI Year of Food & Drink 2016 and beyond with the opening sessions taking place in Hastings Everglades Hotel on 25th & 26th February 2016.

The Year of Food and Drink 2016 has a planned marketing and communication activity which will benefit all of Northern Ireland such as, Marketing, PR and Familiarisation trips and a Spring Campaign and this will enable industry to maximise their full potential.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount spent on the renewable heat incentive in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) domestic installations; (ii) non-domestic installations; and (iii) technology type.
(AQW 54832/11-16)

Mr Bell: The requested figures are provided in the table below. These relate to payments issued in each year. Payments issued in one year may relate to applications from previous years. Thus many payments relating to periods in 2015/16 will be made in subsequent years.

	Biomass	Solar	Air Source Heat Pump	Ground Source Heat Pump
2013/14 Non Domestic	365,632	-	-	-
2013/14 Domestic	725,000	53,120	57,800	210,000
2014/15 Non Domestic	3,992,727	-	-	3,842
2014/15 Domestic	565,000	34,880	205,700	311,500
2015/16 to 25 Feb Non Domestic	15,040,321	99	-	12,663
2015/16 to 25 Feb Domestic	1,066,918	87,171	131,127	259,650

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on his Department's support for activities in South own in relation to the Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink 2016.
(AQW 54879/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Year of Food & Drink 2016 is an exciting initiative which presents an opportunity for us to celebrate all that is great about Northern Ireland Food and Drink.

Tourism NI is leading on this initiative and they have been actively working with industry to support and enable them to maximise the opportunities this initiative presents.

In 2015 Tourism NI co-ordinated a series of dedicated industry roadshows which took place across Northern Ireland. Further Year of Food and Drink Industry Roadshows were held in January 2016 in various locations throughout Northern Ireland.

This was complemented by Tourism Event Funding Programme Roadshows which highlighted the new dedicated Year of Food and Drink Tourism Events Scheme and distributed the Year of Food and Drink Event Organisers Toolkit. The Year of Food and Drink Tourism Events Scheme was an open call application process and there are 5 successful events in the South Down Area awarded a total of £32,000.

Tourism NI, in partnership with WorldHost, Food NI & People 1st, are also currently delivering a pilot WorldHost training scheme entitled 'WorldHost Sales Powered By Service' aimed specifically at the hospitality sector. The programme has a strong emphasis on being prepared for NI Year of Food & Drink 2016 and beyond.

The Year of Food and Drink 2016 has a planned marketing and communication activity which will benefit all of Northern Ireland such as, Marketing, PR, familiarisation trips and a Spring Campaign and this will enable industry to maximise their full potential.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the support available to start-up businesses in West Tyrone.

(AQW 54887/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest NI provides a range of support and practical assistance to start-up businesses across Northern Ireland including West Tyrone. These interventions may be of a financial and non-financial nature.

Export and Global Start assistance is available to entrepreneurs who are starting an export focussed business or who have an established business who are seeking to enter export markets for the first time. These businesses are typically supported in areas of job creation, marketing, ICT, skills and strategy and R&D.

Innovation Vouchers - this scheme provides a voucher of up to £5,000 to enable small and medium sized enterprises to engage with one of the 39 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The voucher allows businesses to access specialist skills and expertise to provide an innovative solution to a business issue that cannot be easily solved by the private sector or other support mechanisms.

The Technical Development Incentive (TDI) can offer business start-ups 50% support on eligible technical supplier costs up to a maximum grant of £5,000. Areas that can be supported include Intellectual Property, investigating new technologies and processes, product and process problem resolution, product approval/global technical compliance, process and quality management schemes and improved product design and performance.

The Propel Programme helps put the structure around the company to commercialise the service or product and seek investment. Selective Financial Assistance can be used to help accelerate growth. Invest NI also provides a wide range of other assistance appropriate for the High Potential Start Up such as helping the companies with design, to train their staff, protect their IP, develop their management team and strengthen their board.

Separate from grants Invest NI also provides support to startups through its Access to Finance Programmes via NI Small Business Loan Fund, Techstart NI and Co-Fund NI and equity to grow businesses can be provided by the Growth Loan Fund and Development Funds respectively.

In addition, the Regional Start Initiative, delivered by Enterprise NI, with Invest NI currently managing the advertising campaign on behalf of local councils, provides individuals who wish to start their own business with advice and the capability to produce their own business plan. The intention is that this business plan will provide a template for the new entrepreneur to plan and access sources of funds for the business.

Advice and guidance is available to all businesses throughout Northern Ireland through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI, in partnership with NI Direct. Businesses can avail of a range of advisory assistance on business related topics including sales & marketing, design and finance as well as information on events.

Department of the Environment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 53176/11-16, whether the deficiencies in the serving of the enforcement notice regarding the deposition of illegal waste at site F were also present in any or all of the other notices served by his Department in relation to Mobouy Road, irrespective of the fact that the appeals of those notices were subsequently withdrawn.

(AQW 54111/11-16)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): My officials have now re-served the notice affecting "site F" on Mobouy Road. I am content that the notices issued on site B-E, G and H are valid notices and have been charged to the Statutory Charges Register and appear on the Planning Register held by Derry City and Strabane District Council.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 53960/11-16, irrespective of the aid provided in interpretation from other sources, whether the actual policies in PPS 21 are what is set out in the text boxes.

(AQW 54227/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Further to my previous answer, I can reaffirm that the policies contained within PPS 21 are set out within the text boxes. However, in applying the policies, they must be read together with the text set out in the Justification and Amplification, in consideration of the overall aim and objectives of the policy and in conjunction with the policies contained elsewhere in the PPS, where relevant.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the research study into unconventional gas exploration and extraction by the Environmental Protection Agency and Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

(AQW 54316/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The research, intended to be completed in two overlapping phases, involves extensive desk-based work (literature review and assessment) by technical experts (Phase 1), as well as baseline-monitoring of seismicity and water resources (Phase 2).

The desk-based work (Phase 1) has now been substantially completed. In January 2016, the EPA was requested by DCENR to pause the next Phase of the research to allow time to review the multiple outputs of Phase 1. Following consideration of this request by the project Steering Committee, the Steering Committee has agreed to complete Phase 1 of the study before any decision is made about future work.

An integrated report will now be prepared and published along with recommendations for any additional research considered appropriate to address the two key questions posed for the study. The integrated report and the other research outputs from Phase 1 (11 reports in total) will further the understanding of the potential impacts on the environment and human health from UGEE projects and operations, including construction, operation and aftercare.

All the Final technical & Summary Reports and the Integrated Report will be made publicly available once Phase 1 reporting is complete later this year.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 53654/11-16, to detail any investigations conducted by his Department near the NI Water facility at Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus, prior to the commencement of drilling by InfraStrata.

(AQW 54337/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Officials in NIEA have carried out 2 site visits and conducted baseline monitoring of surface water and groundwater in and around the site in Woodburn Forest.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to call in the proposed planning application for a gold mine in Greencastle, County Tyrone.

(AQW 54345/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department has determined that the gold mine project in Greencastle as currently proposed by Dalradian Gold Limited would be a development of regional significance. Consequently an application for planning permission must be made to the Department.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on producing material in Irish in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54376/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In the last three financial years the Department has incurred a total of £7,437.58 on producing material in Irish. The table below sets out the Department's expenditure in each of the years in question.

Year	Cost
2012/13	206.40
2013/14	2,113.48
2014/15	5,117.70
Total	£7,437.58

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to ban the fitting of bullbars to non agricultural vehicles.

(AQW 54445/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I do not plan to ban the fitting of bull bars to non-agricultural vehicles.

However, from May 2007, European legislation has prohibited the fitting of frontal protection systems such as bull bars as original equipment, to new cars and goods vehicles not exceeding 3.5 tonnes. The sale of such systems as after-market accessories is also prohibited for any age of vehicle, unless they have been approved to the appropriate safety standards.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Area Plan 2016.

(AQW 54448/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The majority of planning functions were devolved to local councils in April 2015 including powers to create new local development plans.

Part 2 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides councils with the legislative powers to take forward new local development plans for their area. Accordingly the Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Plan 2016 is no longer being taken forward.

Preparation of a new local development plan for the Antrim area now falls within the remit of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council now has the power to create a new local development plan for its area which includes Ballymena and Larne.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the role his Department will play in scrutinising the planning performance of local councils; (ii) how this will be carried out; and (iii) by whom.

(AQW 54475/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department monitors council planning performance through a number of means. Three statutory planning indicators for councils were introduced on 1 April 2015. These cover the processing of local and major applications and enforcement cases. A quarterly bulletin detailing performance across the new 11 councils is prepared by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. In addition, my Department is also currently taking forward work with councils on the introduction of a new planning performance framework in order to broaden the range of planning indicators (beyond the three statutory indicators) to help drive continuous improvement across the planning system.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 contains a number of checks and balances for the planning system. These include scrutiny throughout the local development plan process to ensure local development plans align with central government plans, policies and guidance; call-in powers to allow the Department to determine any application which raises strategic issues beyond individual council areas, or development in which a council has an interest; and reserve powers to take action where the Department believes a council has failed to discharge its planning responsibilities.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 also allows for the assessment of how a council deals with applications for planning permission; however, a review of a council decision cannot be undertaken within the year preceeding the date that a council is notified of any assessment. If considered appropriate, my officials would conduct such a review.

Finally, I believe there is a collective responsibility between local and central government to ensure there is an effective planning system. My Department is working with councils, through various engagement channels such as the Ministerial Planning Group (chaired by me) and the Strategic Planning Group (chaired by the Chief Planner), to drive forward continuous improvement and best practice.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what research his Department has undertaken or commissioned into the effects of proposed pile-driving and commercial ferry services on seals and seal breeding sites in the Greencastle area of Carlingford Lough.

(AQW 54547/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department advised Newry Mourne and Down District Council that seal monitoring should be a condition on the planning permission associated with the proposed Greencastle ferry.

This project was granted planning permission (P/2013/0434/F) on 29 June 2015 and condition 21 states:

“Monthly seal counts at haul out sites in proximity to the operational ferry route shall be conducted prior to and during the operational phase and submitted to and agreed in writing to the planning authority. This must cover a 12 month survey period prior to commencement of the operation phase to provide baseline data.”

The following methodology has been agreed with the Department:

Counts should be undertaken for four survey periods, during each of which a minimum of 5 counts should be carried out.

- Harbour seal pupping (counts to be made during 1st 3 weeks of July)
- Harbour seal moulting (counts to be made between mid-August and 1st 10 days of September)
- Grey seal pupping (counts to be made between last week in September and end of November)
- Winter to early spring (counts to be made between January and end of April)

A second series of counts will be undertaken post construction when the ferry service is operational to make comparisons with the baseline series and assess whether the commercial ferry service is impacting on the seal breeding sites.

Carlingford Lough is an important breeding site for Harbour seals and therefore my Department advised piling operations could not take place between May and October. As result of this mitigation being in place, it is not necessary to assess the impact of pile driving on seal breeding sites. The baseline survey identified that Grey seals did not use the area as breeding site in 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to afford Special Area Conservation or Marine Conservation Zone status to the Greencastle and Green Island area in Carlingford Lough given that it already has Area of Special Scientific Interest; Site of Special Scientific Interest; Special Protection Area; RAMSAR; and OSPAR status.

(AQW 54548/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I am aware that the Greencastle and Green Island area is an important area for marine wildlife, in particular breeding colonies of Common and Sandwich terns and Harbour seal and I am satisfied that the existing designations afford sufficient protection to these important species. The Common and Sandwich Terns are a designated feature of Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area and in recognition of the need to protect their foraging habitat my Department is currently consulting on proposals to extend the boundary to include the marine area of Carlingford Lough and northwards towards Bloody Bridge. The existing designated site only extends to the low water mark.

The Harbour seal is a mobile species and it is understood that the Carlingford Lough population is likely to be part of the same population that is protected within Murlough SAC and Strangford Lough SAC. These sites form the Northern Ireland

contribution to the Natura 2000 network for Harbour seal and any plans or projects in the Carlingford Lough area must give consideration to this in a Habitats Regulations Assessment and include appropriate mitigation measures if necessary.

At this time I have no plans to designate the Greencastle or Green Island area as a Marine Conservation Zone. My Department is currently consulting on proposals for four Marine Conservation Zones, including a site in Carlingford Lough between Warrenpoint and Killowen. Marine Conservation Zones are designated to protect nationally important marine habitats and species and will contribute towards the establishment of an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas as required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The marine protected areas network is made up of the existing marine Natura 2000 sites plus Marine Conservation Zones, Areas of Special Scientific Interest and RAMSAR sites. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, it is intended to formally designate the Marine Conservation Zones by December 2016. Following this, a network assessment will be undertaken and any future designations will be targeted towards filling network gaps.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQO 9667/11-16, (a) how much the repatriation programme has cost to date; and (b) for an estimation of how much it will cost both jurisdictions to complete the repatriation programme.
(AQW 54570/11-16)

Mr Durkan:

- (a) The cost to the Department of the Environment to complete the first 10 sites up to the end of 2014/15 was £462,710. The estimated cost to the Department of the Environment for the two sites completed in 2015/16 is £40,000.
- (b) The estimated total cost to complete the remaining 5 sites in Repatriation Programme is £2,950,000. The Department of the Environment covers 20% of the costs which is £590,000.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to cease issuing any and all marine licences for the Greencastle and Green Island area until a full environmental appraisal has been undertaken.
(AQW 54579/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department is currently processing a Marine Licence for the proposed Greencastle Ferry terminal that will support the operation of the Greencastle to Greenore Ferry. A full Environmental Impact Statement has been undertaken by RPS on behalf of the applicant and my Department has completed a Habitats Regulations Assessment. Following the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, I am satisfied that the conditions on the draft Marine Licence relating to the proposed development are appropriate, and will ensure that the project will not affect the integrity of the designated sites or impact on the protected wildlife in the area. On the basis of this assessment, I do not intend to cease the issuing of this Marine Licence.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department has consulted with relevant stakeholders to assess the need for greater efficiency in the planning process.
(AQW 54591/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Prior to the transfer of planning functions to the new 11 councils on 1 April 2015, my Department engaged in an extensive period of consultation with relevant stakeholders regarding reform of the planning system and the transfer of powers. One of the key purposes of the reform measures was to increase efficiency in the planning system.

Responsibility for most planning functions now rests with district councils. My Department supports councils through various engagement channels such as a Ministerial Planning Group, which I chair and is attended by chief executives, directors and heads of planning, and a Strategic Planning Group, chaired by the Chief Planner and attended by heads of planning. The purpose of these groups is to allow central and local government to come together to discuss planning issues and to identify solutions, as well as to drive forward continuous improvement and best practice. Below these groups Departmental staff attended various planning-related groups within the councils, such as development management, enforcement and local development plan working groups.

In bringing forward future policy and legislative changes, the Department will consult with all relevant stakeholders. Departmental officials also attend numerous public events, seminars and conferences attended by various stakeholders where performance of the planning system is discussed and debated.

My Department recognises the need to continue to support district councils to ensure the effective operation of the new two tier planning system.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail any assessment he has made of the proposed commercial car ferry between Greencastle and Greenore.
(AQW 54621/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As previously explained in my response to AQW 54579/11-16, my Department has completed a Habitats Regulations Assessment for both the planning application and the Marine Licence associated with the development of the proposed commercial car ferry between Greencastle and Greenore. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and I am satisfied that the conditions on the planning permission (P/2013/0434/F) and draft Marine Licence will ensure that the project will not affect the integrity of the designated sites or impact on the protected wildlife in the area.

Likewise, as detailed in AQW 54547/11-16 my Department has requested that monitoring is undertaken during both the pre-construction and operation phases of the proposal. This will allow future assessments to be made on the impact of the ferry operation on seal populations in the area.

In addition, a full Environmental Impact Statement has been undertaken by RPS on behalf of the applicant and my Department has assessed this through both the planning and marine licensing processes.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the average time it takes to process and approve a planning application locally compared to the the time it takes to process in England; and for his assessment of these timeframes. **(AQW 54627/11-16)**

Mr Durkan: Following the transfer of planning responsibilities to local government on 1 April 2015, my Department introduced three statutory planning performance indicators for councils. These cover the processing of local and major applications and enforcement cases. The first quarterly planning statistics bulletin, which was published in November 2015, highlighted performance of councils against the three statutory planning indicators for the first three months of the new two-tier planning system (April – June 2015). This showed that the average processing times to decide major applications was 37.6 weeks across all councils, and 19 weeks to decide local applications.

The time spent processing a planning application in NI cannot be directly compared to the time spent in England, or other UK jurisdictions, as they all have different systems in relation to processes such as validation, neighbour notification and advertising etc. Planning performance in England is officially reported in a way that reflects their own particular system and processing targets and hence is not comparable with NI figures.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has in place to introduce fines for taxi operators that refuse to allow guide dogs in their taxis.

(AQW 54647/11-16)

Mr Durkan: It is currently an offence under Section 37 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) for a taxi driver to refuse to carry an assistance dog or to make any additional charges for doing so. Taxi drivers who are successfully prosecuted for failing to adhere to the requirements of the legislation already face a fine of up to £1000.

My officials are currently working alongside Guide Dogs NI to undertake a focused awareness raising exercise aimed at the taxi industry, to help it to remain legally compliant and provide the best possible service to passengers travelling with assistance dogs.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of how local councils are operating planning functions that were devolved from his Department.

(AQW 54672/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In order to monitor performance of councils with regard to their planning functions, three statutory planning indicators for councils were introduced on 1 April 2015. These cover the processing of local and major applications and enforcement cases. The first quarterly planning statistics bulletin, which was published in November 2015, highlighted performance of councils against the three statutory planning indicators for the first three months of the new two-tier planning system (April – June 2015).

While neither the major nor local indicators were met, these results have to be seen in context of the new two-tier system bedding-in. The creation of the councils and the transfer of planning functions represented a major challenge to both central and local government. Not only were the new 11 councils being established, but also a significantly reformed planning system was being introduced, with new processes for development management, local development plans, enforcement and appeals. In addition, many of the applications processed during this period were applications received by the Department during the months leading up to the transfer to councils, and these would undoubtedly have had an adverse impact upon processing times. It will still take some time for these legacy applications to be processed through the system. While noting that some elements of performance slipped, I was pleased to note that other elements, such as the processing of enforcement cases and the determining of applications over 1 year old, had improved.

I am confident that the immense amount of work undertaken by the councils in integrating their new planning functions will start to bear fruit in the coming months. I believe that the transfer of planning powers was, and is, the right thing to have done. Planning is back where it belongs – with councils, who now have the ability to determine what development, and what sort of development, will take place within their areas.

I believe there is a collective responsibility between local and central government to ensure there is an effective planning system. My Department is working with councils, through various engagement channels such as the Ministerial Planning Group (chaired by me) and the Strategic Planning Group (chaired by the Chief Planner), to drive forward continuous improvement and best practice.

My Department is currently taking forward work with councils on the introduction of a new planning performance framework in order to broaden the range of planning indicators (beyond the three statutory indicators) to help drive continuous improvement across the planning system.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to call-in any further decision making on the proposed commercial ferry and any associated works in Carlingford Lough, given the condition that disallows pile-driving during the breeding season of grey and harbour seals.

(AQW 54698/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The peak breeding season for Harbour seals is between June and July, with Grey seals breeding between September and October. Newry Mourne and Down District council has granted planning permission (P/2013/0434/F) for the construction of the Greencastle ferry terminal and is currently considering an application (LA07/2015/1350F) to amend condition 19 to allow piling in the month of April. I am content that piling in the month of April is not within the seal breeding season and I do not intend to exercise the call-in procedures under Section 29 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of complaints his Department has received in relation to taxi drivers refusing access to guide dogs, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54923/11-16)

Mr Durkan: There have been no specific complaints received by my Department concerning taxi drivers refusing to carry guide dogs.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment why he has asked for further submissions in relation to maximum noise contours at Belfast City Airport, given the Planning Appeals Commission have concluded their report on this issue following the public inquiry.

(AQW 55094/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The recommended contour is clearly the central recommendation contained within the Planning Appeals Commission report in my decision on whether or not to lift the existing the Seats for Sale restriction from the Planning Agreement. I have simply decided to invite comments on that contour in order to inform the decision making process.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment what guidance is available to taxi companies on fitting taxi meters prior to the implementation of the Taxis Act in May 2016.

(AQW 55136/11-16)

Mr Durkan: When the praying period in respect of the taximeter regulations elapsed on 2 February 2016, the Department communicated to all taxi drivers and operators to advise them of the new taximeter requirements and the relevant timescales.

The Department has also updated the NI Direct website to reflect the changes taking place in May 2016. The website hosts the Department's Approved Taximeter & Printer List, which will guide operators and drivers in terms of which devices are appropriate to install and use. There is also included on the website the new Maximum Fare structure so that operators are aware of the new restrictions around taxi fares.

Guidance will continue to be issued to the industry as the commencement date for the incoming regime approaches.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there are any rating consequences if the regional stadia are licensed as anticipated by the Licensing Bill NIA 69/11-16.

(AQW 54484/11-16)

Mr Storey (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): It is not envisaged that there will be any rating consequences if the regional stadia are licensed as anticipated by the Licensing Bill NIA 69/11-16.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 53519/11-16, how many of the five Fast Stream participants promoted since 2011 received their promotion after November 2015.

(AQW 54494/11-16)

Mr Storey: None of the five fast stream participants referred to in the response to AQW 53519/11-16 received their promotion after November 2015.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many agency staff are employed in each Department.

(AQW 54538/11-16)

Mr Storey: The number of agency staff employed in each NICS Department as of 31st January 2016 is set out in the table overleaf.

Number of agency staff employed in each NICS Department as of 31st January 2016.

Department	Number of Agency Staff
DSD	242
DFP	85
DOJ	60
DE	7
DOE	41
DCAL	7
DARD	35
DEL	7
DETI	2
DRD	12
PPS	1
OFMDFM	35
DHSSPS	0
Total	534

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any agency staff employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service were beneficiaries of the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 54540/11-16)

Mr Storey: The information requested is not held by my Department.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) current procedures for investigating complaints against senior civil servants; (ii) number of complaints in each of the last five years; and (iii) the outcomes of these complaints.

(AQW 54575/11-16)

Mr Storey: Each individual department in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has its own complaints investigation procedure depending on the subject matter of the complaint. Monitoring information is not held centrally for the NICS.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what percentage of Northern Ireland businesses export to other EU countries.

(AQW 54645/11-16)

Mr Storey: Headline export statistics are published by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. These figures do not include data on the number of Northern Ireland businesses who export.

However, the survey based Broad Economy Sales and Exports statistics (BESES) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency estimates that in 2014, 17% (8,301 out of 49,135) of survey eligible Northern Ireland businesses exported to other EU countries.

The BESES data is gathered through the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI). The NIABI collects both financial and employment information from businesses and other establishments and covers about two thirds of the economy.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of businesses; and (ii) the value to which businesses benefitted from the Empty Property Rate Relief Scheme since its introduction in 2012, in Lagan Valley.

(AQW 54667/11-16)

Mr Storey: As at 31st January 2016, a total of 28 non-domestic properties within the Lagan Valley Parliamentary Constituency area have benefitted from Empty Premises Relief since its introduction on 1st April 2012. A total of £145,934 in Empty Premises Relief has been awarded to these properties.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of staff that have availed of the Voluntary Exit Scheme in each tranche, in (a) his Department; and (b) in each of its arm's-length bodies, including the (i) their grade; and (ii) whether they were part time or full time staff.

(AQW 54699/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Department of Finance and Personnel and Personnel response is detailed in the attached table. It should be noted that the NICS Scheme did not extend to the Department's arm's-length bodies.

Number of DFP Staff who have availed of VES (Tranches 1-4)

Grade (all disciplines)	Tranche 1		Tranche 2		Tranche 3		Tranche 4	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Industrial					1			
Accountant (DP)	1		1					
Administrative Assistant	1	1	6		9	1	6	5
Administrative Officer	14	6	12	8	16	24	9	15
Assistant Director			1					
Assistant Economist	1							
Assistant Information Officer					1			
Assistant Librarian				1				
Assistant Statistician	3		6	2				
Assistant Valuer	1	2	1	2				
Auditor DP MIIA and Bats							1	
Chief Clerk of Works (spto)	1							
Chief Law Clerk			1					
Clerk of Works 1 (hpto)	2	1			1			
Clerk of Works 2 (pto)	3							
Deputy Economist				1				
Deputy Principal Statistician			3	3				2
Deputy Principal	3	6	5	1	7	1	3	
District Valuer (g6)			1					
Executive Officer i	1	1	5	3	5	1	3	1
Executive Officer ii	4	5	4	1	8	5	4	3
Fire Officer 2 (pto)		1						
Higher Map and Charting Officer		1						
HPTO (architect assistant)	1							
HPTO (civil engineer assistant)		1						
HPTO (structural engineer assistant)	1						1	
HPTO Graphic Designer						1		
HPTO Safety Advisory Officer								1
ICT Level 3	3		1		3		2	
ICT Level 4			2	1	3	2		
ICT Level 5		1	3					
ICT Level 6	2		1					
ICT Level 7		1						
ICT Level 8							1	
Law Clerk 1				1				
Mapper						1		
Mapping and Charting Officer	4	4		1		2		
Medical Officer		1						

Grade (all disciplines)	Tranche 1		Tranche 2		Tranche 3		Tranche 4	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Nurse Grade G		1						
Personal Secretary		3	1		2			
PPTO (architect) (g7)	1	2						
PPTO civil engineer	1							
PPTO quantity surveyor (g7)						1		
PR Mapping and Charting Officer (g7)			1					
Principal Economist (g7)			1					
Principal Legal Officer			1	3	1			
Principal Statistician (g7)	1						1	
Principal	1	4	4	3	1			
PTO (architectural assistant)					1			
Senior Map and Charting Officer			1		1			
Senior Mapper					1			
Senior Personal Secretary	1							
Senior Principal (g6)	1							
Senior Principal Legal Officer		2	1			1		
Senior Principal Statistician (g6)			1					
Senior Valuer (g7)	1	2						
SGB2 Security Guard	1			1			2	
SPTO (architectural assistant)	2	1						
SPTO (M and E engineer)	2							
SPTO (M and E engineering assistant)	1							
SPTO (quantity surveying assistant)	1							
SPTO Health and Safety Adviser	1							
Staff Officer	3	1	4	1	11	3	7	2
SGB1 Security Guard	2	2						
Support Grade Band 1		2			1		1	1
Support Grade Band 2	1	1						
Support Manager 3								1
Typist	1				1		6	4
Valuer i	2	3				1		
Valuer ii		3		1		1		
SCS Assistant Secretary		1	1					1
SCS Assistant Solicitor			1					
SCS Senior Medical Officer		1						
Total	70	61	70	34	74	45	47	36

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of full time equivalent agency staff employed in (a) his Department; and (b) each of its arm's-length bodies; and their grade, in each week since June 2015.

(AQW 54700/11-16)

Mr Storey: The information requested is detailed in the attached tables.

Table (a) Number of full time equivalent agency staff employed in DFP since June 2015.

Week Commencing	AA	AO	EOII	EOI	SO	DP	G7	G6	Total
01/06/2015	13	8	2	11	17	14	0	0	65
08/06/2015	12	8	2	14	16	14	0	0	66
15/06/2015	11	8	2	17	16	15	0	0	69
22/06/2015	11	10	2	19	16	15	0	0	73
29/06/2015	11	10	2	20	15	15	0	0	73
06/07/2015	11	10	2	20	15	15	0	0	73
13/07/2015	11	10	2	20	14	15	0	0	72
20/07/2015	11	10	2	20	14	15	0	0	72
27/07/2015	12	10	2	20	14	15	0	0	73
03/08/2015	12	10	2	20	15	16	0	0	75
10/08/2015	11	11	2	20	16	16	0	0	76
17/08/2015	11	10	2	20	17	16	0	0	76
24/08/2015	11	10	2	20	17	16	0	0	76
31/08/2015	11	9	2	21	18	16	0	0	77
07/09/2015	11	10	2	21	18	16	0	0	78
14/09/2015	10	10	2	22	18	16	0	0	78
21/09/2015	10	10	2	26	18	16	0	0	82
28/09/2015	10	10	2	26	18	16	0	0	82
05/10/2015	10	10	1	28	17	16	0	0	82
12/10/2015	10	10	1	24	19	16	0	0	80
19/10/2015	10	10	1	26	19	16	0	0	82
26/10/2015	10	10	1	26	18	15	0	0	80
02/11/2015	10	10	1	26	18	16	0	0	81
09/11/2015	10	10	1	24	17	16	0	0	78
16/11/2015	10	10	1	24	16	16	0	0	77
23/11/2015	11	10	1	24	16	16	0	0	78
30/11/2015	11	15	1	24	16	16	0	0	83
07/12/2015	11	15	1	24	14	16	0	0	81
14/12/2015	11	16	1	25	14	16	0	0	83
21/12/2015	12	16	1	25	14	16	0	0	84
28/12/2015	12	16	1	25	14	16	0	0	84
04/01/2016	11	17	1	25	16	17	0	0	87
11/01/2016	11	22	1	25	17	17	0	0	93
18/01/2016	11	22	1	25	17	17	0	0	93
25/01/2016	11	22	1	25	17	17	0	0	93
01/02/2016	11	25	1	25	17	19	0	0	98
08/02/2016	11	26	1	25	16	19	0	0	98
15/02/2016	11	26	1	25	17	19	0	0	99
22/02/2016	11	26	1	25	17	22	0	0	102
29/02/2016	11	26	1	25	18	23	1	0	105

Table (b) Number of full time equivalent agency staff employed in SEUPB since June 2015.

Period	No. of Weeks	Total No. of FT Equivalent Agency Staff	Grade
w/c 1/6/2015 – w/c 27/7/2015	9 weeks	2	1 x equivalent to Deputy Principal 1 x equivalent to Staff Officer
w/c 3/8/2015 – w/c 28/12/2015	22 weeks	1	1 x equivalent to Staff Officer
w/c 4/01/2016 – w/c 22/2/2016	8 weeks	0	-
Total	-	3	-

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of businesses that currently benefit from sports and recreation rate relief.

(AQW 54737/11-16)

Mr Storey: As at 31st January 2016, a total of 793 non-domestic properties had benefitted from sports and recreation rate relief in Northern Ireland in the 2015/16 rating year.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of manufacturing jobs in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54764/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency collects information on the number of employee jobs by industry sector in the Quarterly Employment Survey.

The table overleaf provides information on the number of employee jobs in manufacturing in Northern Ireland (NI) from 2011-2015.

Table: Northern Ireland manufacturing jobs, September 2011 - September 2015

Period	Total manufacturing employee jobs
September 2011	73,980
September 2012	74,440
September 2013	75,180
September 2014	76,610
September 2015	80,460

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Quarterly Employment Survey

Figures are seasonally adjusted, rounded to the nearest 10.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of people living on their own in South Down, who are aged 70 years and over, and have (i) applied for a 20 per cent reduction in their rates bill; and (ii) received a successful outcome to their application.

(AQW 54784/11-16)

Mr Storey: In the current rating year to date (1st April 2015 to 31st January 2016), 154 people living in the South Down Parliamentary Constituency area applied for Lone Pensioner Allowance from Land & Property Services (LPS). Of those who applied, 136 received a successful outcome to their application.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail by how much the aggregate rateable valuations for business rates have declined or increased in (i) Newcastle; (ii) Rathfriland; (iii) Downpatrick; (iv) Kilkeel; (v) Ballynahinch; (vi) Banbridge; and (vii) Annalong.

(AQW 54786/11-16)

Mr Storey: I would refer the Member to my answer to AQW 54284/11-16.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the review of non-domestic rates.

(AQW 54870/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Review of the Non-Domestic Rating System consultation exercise officially closed on 25 January. The Department did however allow respondents until the end of January, with the final response accepted on the 5 February. The

Department received 113 responses from organisations and individual ratepayers which represents a good outcome in terms of level of engagement.

Any significant reforms emerging from this review will eventually need new primary legislation. Therefore, as the current Assembly mandate will end in March, it will be for the next Executive to take this forward.

A consultation report has been drafted and earlier this month it was independently validated by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre. It will be published shortly.

The DFP Committee has been briefed already on the main review findings and further briefing will take place over the coming months as this mandate draws to a close and the newly elected administration is established. The Committee's views will be taken into account before options are formally presented to the new Executive Ministers for decision.

Any changes that are radical or contentious will need further research, impact assessment work and additional consultation before being presented for decision.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department provides any advice or guidance on where organisations can get assistance and training on how to fill out forms when applying for EU funding.

(AQW 54891/11-16)

Mr Storey: My Department oversees the implementation of EU Structural Funds programmes in Northern Ireland. The responsibility for delivering EU Programmes, including assisting applicants, lies with the relevant Programme Managing Authorities.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the projected increase in the population of older people in North Down.

(AQW 54944/11-16)

Mr Storey: Population projections are not produced for Assembly Areas. They are however produced for Local Government Districts, both the former 26 and current 11.

This question was asked and answered as part of AQW 54355/11/16. The details of that answer are provided in Table 1 where information is given for the mid-year population statistics for persons aged 65 or over resident in the former North Down Local Government District. Population estimates are provided for mid-2012, as well as projections for each of the years mid-2014, mid-2016, mid-2018, mid-2020, and mid-2022. The latest available projected figures for areas within Northern Ireland use the mid-2012 population estimates as the base population.

Table 1: Estimates, projections and percentage change for the population aged 65 and over in the former North Down Local Government District, mid-2012 to mid-2022

	Population aged 65 and over	Projected percentage change since 2012
Estimated		
2012	15,000	-
Projected		
2014	15,800	5.4
2016	16,600	10.5
2018	17,300	15.4
2020	18,000	19.9
2022	18,800	25.0

Statistics of this nature are routinely published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). These statistics, including further age breakdowns for the former North Down Local Government District and each of the 11 current Local Government Districts, can be accessed on the NISRA website.

For ease of reference, Table 2 provides the same information as provided in Table 1 but for the current Ards and North Down Local Government District.

Table 2: Estimates, projections and percentage change for the population aged 65 and over in the current Ards and North Down Local Government District, mid-2012 to mid-2022

	Population aged 65 and over	Projected percentage change since 2012
Estimated		

	Population aged 65 and over	Projected percentage change since 2012
2012	29,000	-
Projected		
2014	30,800	6.3
2016	32,400	11.8
2018	33,900	17.0
2020	35,400	22.0
2022	37,000	27.6

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the percentage unemployment rate in North Down; and how this compares to the same figure for North Down in June 2011.

(AQW 55001/11-16)

Mr Storey: The official Northern Ireland measure of unemployment is sourced to the Labour Force Survey. However, due to sample size constraints, rates of unemployment in each Parliamentary Constituency are not sourced to the Labour Force Survey because of the relatively large confidence intervals around the estimates.

Information is available from the claimant count measure of unemployment. The table shows the number of persons aged 16-64 claiming unemployment related benefits in the North Down Parliamentary Constituency.

Table: North Down Claimant Count, June 2011 and January 2016

	Claimants of unemployment related benefit (16-64) North Down	
	Number	Rate (% of resident working age population)
June 2011	1,993	3.5%
January 2016	1,329	2.4%

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the equal pay settlement for civil servants that worked for the PSNI and Northern Ireland Office.

(AQW 55068/11-16)

Mr Storey: This issue, which is not one of equal pay, cannot be resolved by the Department of Finance and Personnel and Personnel acting alone and will require Executive consideration. I have circulated a second version of an Executive paper dealing with this issue to my Ministerial colleagues. It is now for the Executive to consider the issue.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) combined Departmental Expenditure Limits resource for the Department of the Environment and Department of Agriculture for 2014-15; and (ii) proposed budget for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the percentage cut this represents.

(AQW 55092/11-16)

Mr Storey: The 2011-15 Budget provides details of the DEL allocations for each department in 2014-15. The joint position for the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the Department for Agriculture (DARD) is £323.7 million non-ring-fenced Resource DEL, £15.9 million ring-fenced Resource DEL and £37.2 million Capital DEL.

The 2016-17 Budget provided non-ring-fenced Resource DEL of £197.9 million and £48.8 million Capital DEL for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DAERA). Ring-fenced Resource DEL was not addressed in Budget 2016-17 as it was not included in the Spending Review 2015 outcome.

A percentage comparison between the combined DOE and DARD budgets for 2014-15 and the DAERA budget for 2016-17 would not be appropriate. This is because the restructuring of departments has meant that a number of functions in both DARD and DOE have transferred to departments other than DAERA. In addition, DAERA has inherited functions from departments other than DARD and DOE. The "Fresh Start" agreement provides further details of this.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether funding will be made available to secure a long term strategy to address flooding.

(AQO 9819/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Executive sub-group, comprising the Agriculture, Environment and Regional Development Ministers, together with myself, met on 18th January 2016. We agreed that the priority should be investment to prevent flooding and the damage

which is caused, including the new Household Protection scheme recently announced by the DARD Minister, and also work which can be carried out by DRD to reduce the inconvenience caused by flooding on roads, particularly in rural areas.

Much of this work will fall to the new Department of Infrastructure in the 2016-17 financial year and the Executive can consider the resource impact of this through the in-year monitoring process.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, when determining the capital funding allocated to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Social Services and Public Safety or through the Invest to Save initiative, whether he took into consideration the potential impact of capital investment in local Health and Care Centres in Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey.

(AQO 9811/11-16)

Mr Storey: In determining the 2016/17 capital allocation for DHSSPS, I considered a capital bid for the Primary and Community Care Infrastructure, which included Health and Care Centres. The Executive allocated the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Social Services and Public Safety a capital allocation of £232.6m. It is a decision for DHSSPS to prioritise funding across that department.

The Invest to Save Schemes included an allocation for Transforming Your Care. The development and construction of “hubs and spokes” Health and Care Centres is a key area of Transforming Your Care. It was however for the Health Minister to prioritise the allocation of the ring-fenced Invest to Save funding under the Transforming Your Care banner.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the local housing market.

(AQO 9814/11-16)

Mr Storey: My Department recently released a quarterly report of the Northern Ireland Residential Property Price Index. This statistical research uniquely examines every sale in Northern Ireland using data from HM Revenue & Customs and from Land & Property Services. It is therefore a valuable and reliable source of information for everyone interested in our local housing market.

The figures in the report for the fourth quarter of 2015 show a 1% quarterly increase in the Index – with small variations between property types. The analysis demonstrates that, viewed over the 12 month period, residential property prices have again shown steady progress, with an annual increase of 7%. The analysis at Council level shows annual increases of between 3% and 13% across all District Council areas.

So I believe that this is evidence of an encouraging period in Northern Ireland’s housing market with steady price growth combined with continuing affordability.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development appeal for Western nations to have less austerity and more public investment.

(AQO 9817/11-16)

Mr Storey: With global economic growth remaining subdued, the OECD has questioned the austerity measures still being applied in many developed nations. In particular, it suggests that Western Governments have “room to manoeuvre” in tackling public debt, and as such, should seek to increase investment in key economic infrastructure.

I recognise that high levels of public sector debt represent a burden on the economy that must be dealt with. However in questioning the extent of austerity, the OECD has reaffirmed my view that debt should be tackled in a way and at a pace that also promotes growth in all the regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the progress made on the second-round effects of devolving Corporation Tax to Northern Ireland.

(AQO 9818/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Northern Ireland Executive has pressed hard to secure corporation tax powers. Our commitment to lower the rate to 12.5% from April 2018 as part of the Fresh Start Agreement has the potential to promote growth and much needed employment. Amongst other UK countries, only Northern Ireland has been successful in securing this important power.

That Stormont House Agreement was clear that, following corporation tax devolution, the Northern Ireland Block Grant will not be adjusted to take account of second round effects on other taxes.

My Department continues to engage with Her Majesty’s Government in order to agree the precise mechanism for adjusting the Block Grant and to secure an outcome that is fair and proportionate to Northern Ireland.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, following his visit to the Lisburn Road in Belfast to meet local businesses, to outline the steps he is taking to increase confidence amongst small business owners.

(AQO 9820/11-16)

Mr Storey: I undertook the visit to the Lisburn Road to see at first hand the help provided to new businesses locating in long term empty shops through the empty premises rate relief scheme.

The following week I took legislation through the Assembly to extend that scheme for another year. That is one step I took since my visit. Another step was to take legislation through to extend exemption for ATMs in rural areas. That too, is good for small businesses in many parts of Northern Ireland (though obviously not those located on the Lisburn Road).

These are relatively modest measures. However, it is also worth noting that my Department took the last step in the budget process by only raising the regional rate only in line with the GDP deflator measure of inflation.

Keeping rates rises under control is a key achievement of this Assembly, and the Executive has been consistent in providing certainty for business in the managed way it has controlled its rate increases over the last number of years.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the impact of any removal of the rates exemption for charity shops.

(AQO 9821/11-16)

Mr Storey: As the Member is aware, my Department is currently undertaking a review of the non-domestic rating system. The treatment of charity shops was an issue that various business organisations, District Councils and many others commented on during the related consultation. One of the points identified through that process is the fact that we are the only part of the UK that fully exempts virtually all charity shops. In England, Wales and Scotland the majority pay 20% rates.

This is a sensitive matter and my officials are now in the process of thoroughly analysing the responses on this issue, alongside all the other issues that emerged from the consultation.

Any policy outcomes from the review on this subject, however, will be a matter for the new Executive in the next mandate and I can confirm that I will not be changing the policy in the meantime.

Should the next Executive make any changes in this area then an assessment of the impact of those changes on businesses, charities or the voluntary sector would be conducted by DFP as part of the integrated impact assessment process.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre's cost of division independent audit report.

(AQO 9822/11-16)

Mr Storey: It is my intention to publish the report as soon as I have considered its findings.

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of whether a reduction in rate relief for charity shops will lead to an increase in vacant shops on local high streets.

(AQO 9823/11-16)

Mr Storey: As I have already advised a number of Assembly Members in my answers to earlier Assembly questions, any policy decisions of this nature arising from the Review of Non-domestic rating system will be a matter for the Executive in the next mandate and I can confirm that I will not be changing the policy in the meantime.

This decision of the next Executive will be based on the evidence base established by the review. Given the review has not yet been completed, at this time I am unable to provide an assessment on this issue.

However, in GB where most charity shops are subject to 20% rating liability, there is no evidence to suggest the number of vacant units is growing as a result of this.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered (i) the potential for future expansion of the Minor Ailments Scheme; and (ii) the financial impact this will have on the Health Service

(AQW 48623/11-16)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Minor Ailments Scheme is the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). As part of a wider review of all pharmacy services, the HSCB is considering the performance of the Minor Ailments Scheme and whether it is cost effective given the strategic and policy direction around self care. Any decision about future expansion and financial impact would be informed by the outcome of that review.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) income received from parking fines, (ii) number of parking fines issued; and (iii) value of parking fines issued at each hospital in the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 49304/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Since October 2012 a total of 2,598 parking charge notices were issued by the third party contractor who operated on the hospital sites owned by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

No other parking charge notices have been issued by any of the other Health and Social Care Trust's.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will support the implementation of (i) proposals within the Transforming Your Palliative and End of Life Care Programme; (ii) the End of Life Care Operational System; (iii) the recommendations of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority review of the implementation of the Living Matters: Dying Matters Strategy, to support delivery of comprehensive coverage of palliative and end of life care services. **(AQW 49581/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: 'Living Matters: Dying Matters', my Department's palliative and end of life care strategy for adults, was published in March 2010 with a vision that any person with an advanced, non-curative condition is supported to live well and die well irrespective of their condition or care setting. I am pleased that significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Strategy's recommendations to improve palliative and end of life care across Northern Ireland.

Implementation of the Strategy has also been supported by the Transforming Your Palliative and End of Life Care (TYPELC) programme taken forward in partnership between the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency (PHA) and Marie Curie.

I am aware of the wide-ranging work which has been being progressed by the TYPELC programme to improve the design and delivery of co-ordinated services and enable people with palliative and end of life care needs to have choice in their preferred place of care. Improving palliative and end of life care will continue to be a focus for my Department in the future, working in partnership with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency (PHA) and other key stakeholders.

Planning of care for people with palliative care needs has also been supported by the development and implementation of the End of Life Care Operational System (ELCOS) to identify people with palliative and end of life care needs so that those needs can be appropriately assessed and preferences for care identified.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority report on the implementation of the Living Matters: Dying Matters Strategy was published on 28 January 2016. I welcome the review's findings that significant progress was made during the period 2010 to 2015 towards implementing the recommendations of the Living Matters: Dying Matters Strategy. My Department is considering the findings and recommendations of the review report and how they might inform the planning and delivery of palliative and end of life care in Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for an update on the International Working Group's recommendations for the future of children's cardiac services; and (ii) how the recommendations are being delivered. [R] **(AQW 50024/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: The all-island Congenital Heart Disease Network Board was established in April 2015 to plan and implement the phased transfer of surgery and cardiac catheterisation to Dublin from Belfast, in line with the International Working Group's recommendations. The Network Board will shortly submit a detailed implementation plan and business case to both myself and the Republic of Ireland Health Minister. This will set out the detailed future service model to build-up capacity in Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin for Northern Ireland patients. A Northern Ireland Implementation Subgroup of the Network Board is planning the implementation of proposals put forward by Belfast Trust cardiologists to strengthen the Northern Ireland hub in the all-island network.

Until the long-term plan is in place we remain reliant on the majority of elective procedures being carried out by specialist heart centres in England until sufficient capacity has been developed in Dublin to accommodate Northern Ireland patients. Since April 2015 all Northern Ireland paediatric patients requiring cardiac catheterisation now undergo this procedure in Dublin. Interim arrangements are also in place for emergency cases to be transferred to Dublin as required. The Mothers of babies, who are diagnosed antenatal in Belfast with heart conditions, are also transferred to Dublin for the birth and the required interventional procedure to be carried out in Dublin.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people in the last eighteen months that have (i) continued to occupy a hospital bed beyond the period indicated by clinical need; or (ii) been relocated to contingency beds in nursing homes because resources were not available to provide necessary care packages at home. **(AQW 50471/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) During the last 18 months (May 2014 – October 2015), 6,241 complex discharges waited longer than the 48 hour standard to be discharged from hospital after being declared medically fit for discharge.
- (ii) 432 people in the last eighteen months have been relocated to contingency beds in nursing homes because resources were not available to provide necessary care packages at home.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail what input his Department has had in the creation of the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall, Loughborough; and (ii) for his assessment of the impact the centre will have on armed forces personnel injured in the line of duty. **(AQW 50565/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: Consultants currently refer serving members of the military and those injured in the line of duty to Headley Court, Surrey, for their rehabilitation. I understand that Stanford Hall, chosen for its central location and its accessibility to the

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, where armed forces personnel are also treated, will open in 2017 and take on this important role in the provision of rehabilitation.

The Department has not been involved in discussions regarding the development of Stanford Hall.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients awaiting a transplant in each of the last three years, broken down by organ type.

(AQW 50566/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is publicly available on the NHS Blood and Transplant website at the address: https://nhsbtbe.blob.core.windows.net/umbraco-assets/1069/northern_ireland.pdf

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the urological services offered in the South West Acute Hospital; and (ii) what urological facilities exist but are not currently being utilised within the South West Acute Hospital.

(AQW 50778/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Consultant led outpatient urological services including some local anaesthetic urological diagnostic procedures are provided at the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH). There are two theatres and an endoscopy suite that are available for future service expansion at the SWAH

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what funding his Department and its arm's-length bodies have provided to Outburst Queer Arts Festival; (ii) to outline the purpose of such funding; and (iii) what funding went towards the staging of The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven.

(AQW 50867/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) My Department did not provide funding to the Festival. I am advised that the Public Health Agency provided £2,000;
- (ii) the purpose of which was the promotion of public health information relating to sexual health, HIV and mental health and wellbeing; (iii) no funding went towards the screening of The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven performance.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much of the additional £46m assigned to his Department in the November monitoring round will be allocated to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 51305/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department received additional resource funding of £47.6m in the November Monitoring Round, of which £7.5m was allocated to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the budget directed to public fire safety awareness in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52975/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The reduction in public fire safety awareness budget is set in the context of a reduction in the number of incident calls (33,992 in 2014/15, 48,632 in 2010/11, down 30%) and the number of mobilisations (22,781 in 2014/15, 30,784 in 2010/11, down 26%).

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service budget for Public Fire Safety Awareness in each of the past 5 years is as follows:

Year	£
2010-11	1,941,164
2011-12	1,579,998
2012-13	798,807
2013-14	691,819
2014-15	563,200

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department spent on cosmetic surgery and treatment, broken down by clinical discipline and the number of patients, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53481/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Purely cosmetic operations are not funded by the Health and Social Care Service in Northern Ireland.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money his Department has spent on marriage support services in each of the last five calendar years; and to list the projects which have received financial support. (AQW 53587/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The total spending by my Department on marriage support services is shown in the table below. Funding from my Department contributes towards the core administrative running costs in these organisations. Information is collected per financial year.

Organisation	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Relate NI	£218,622	£218,622	£218,622	£218,622	£218,622
Accord	£87,150	£87,150	£87,150	£87,150	£87,150

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Health and Social Care Trusts also provide funding to these organisations for marriage support services in Northern Ireland. The total amount provided in the previous 5 years is shown in the table below. Information relates to agreements that include an element of marriage support work

		2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Relate NI	HSCB	£354,9491	£273,087	£269,025	£264,528	£261,909
	BHSCT	£37,791	£39,780	£39,780		
	NHSCT	£53,083		£103,082		
	WHSCCT		£43,041	£50,488	£50,488	£49,989
Accord NI	HSCB		£20,953	£20,641	£20,296	£20,096
	NHSCT	£7,686	£13,170	£13,170	£13,170	£13,170
	WHSCCT		£13,944	£16,356	£16,356	£16,194

- 1 In 2015/16 a regional counselling service for parents of children under 18 was awarded to Relate after a competitive tendering process by the HSCB.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department has spent on (i) the Return to Work for Nurses scheme; and (ii) a one per cent pay increase for nurses. (AQW 53672/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) My Department commissions 32 places each year on the Return to Practice Programme at a cost of £39,372. This year an additional £83,666 of funding will pay for an extra 68 places on the Programme.
- (ii) The 1% 2015/16 non-consolidated award, as announced on 8 January 2016 for Agenda for Change (AfC) staff, will cost an estimated £10 million.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting lists for children's Autism Spectrum Disorder assessments broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 53676/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The tables below detail the waiting lists for children's Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments at 31 December in each of the last three years.

Table 1 – Children waiting for an ASD assessment in the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust at 31 December in each of the last three years

Year	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	>13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
2013	55	52	40	151						298
2014	48	57	52		57	91	202	83	0	590
2015	24	52	80		48	99	166	137	268	874

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Grey boxes indicate changes in the reporting format

Table 2 – Children waiting for an ASD assessment in the Northern Health & Social Care Trust at 31 December in each of the last three years

Year	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	>13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
2013	73	84	30	0						187
2014	73	67	66		61	79	4	0	0	350
2015	51	72	86		95	152	146	70	11	683

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Grey boxes indicate changes in the reporting format

Table 3 – Children waiting for an ASD assessment in the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust at 31 December in each of the last three years

Year	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	>13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
2013	41	47	61	44						193
2014	23	26	35		23	28	6	0	0	141
2015	28	31	31		15	24	4	0	0	133

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Grey boxes indicate changes in the reporting format

Table 4 – Children waiting for an ASD assessment in the Southern Health & Social Care Trust at 31 December in each of the last three years

Year	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	>13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
2013	9	17	13	0						39
2014	8	9	5		0	0	0	0	0	22
2015	13	15	12		0	0	0	0	0	40

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Grey boxes indicate changes in the reporting format

Table 5 – Children waiting for an ASD assessment in the Western Health & Social Care Trust at 31 December in each of the last three years

Year	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	>13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
2013	23	33	22	7						85
2014	31	29	45		20	34	12	0	0	171
2015	33	41	58		32	62	116	7	0	349

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Grey boxes indicate changes in the reporting format

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to improve cervical screening rates among women with learning disabilities.
(AQW 53744/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Each Health and Social Trust area has a Community Learning Disability Team who have an important role in preparing a woman for having a cervical screening test, ensuring that she has an understanding of the screening process and how the test is taken. To facilitate this, an 'easy read' leaflet and book are available to support women who are invited for screening.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has engaged with the Community Learning Disability Nurse regional group to raise awareness of the cancer screening programmes. They have also met with learning disability organisations across Northern Ireland, facilitated by the Association for Real Change (ARC) Northern Ireland, to enable them help people with learning disabilities make informed decisions around cancer screening.

Since 2009 the PHA has held a contract with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) to raise awareness of the cancer screening programmes and to improve the uptake of these programmes (consistent with the principles of

informed consent) by women from communities and populations who are often hard to reach and historically have low uptake levels of screening programmes. This includes those with learning, physical or sensory disabilities. Initially this contract covered the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust areas only. Following an open tender, the PHA awarded a three year contract to WRDA in June 2015, to extend this service regionally. To date, 43 educational awareness sessions have been delivered to approximately 425 attendees from target service user groups. Since June 2015, 20 bespoke specialist workshops have also been delivered to participants with additional support needs, including those with learning, physical or sensory disabilities.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to address the continued decline in cervical screening uptake rates.

(AQW 53745/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Over the past 10 years there has been a steady increase in cervical screening coverage rates. In 2005 the coverage rate was 71% and by 31 March 2015, the rate was 77%. There has however been a very slight decline from March 2013 when coverage reached 78%.

The Public Health Agency continually monitors the performance of the Cervical Screening Programme and has put in place a number of actions to maintain and increase uptake. These include;

- the provision of information leaflets designed to meet the needs of the target population;
- focus group work with attenders and non-attenders to better understand barriers to attendance;
- the development of a video aimed at young women invited for cervical screening for the first time;
- the provision of information on a dedicated website; and
- working with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) to target groups of women who find it difficult to engage with the service.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department plans to relocate community nurses in West Tyrone into acute care or any other health setting.

(AQW 53758/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Trust has no plans to relocate community nurses in West Tyrone into acute care or any other health setting

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hospitalised patients that are currently waiting for a place in a residential, nursing or care home in the (i) the Northern; and (ii) Western Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 53767/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My department has set a target that 90% of complex discharges from an acute hospital are discharged within 48 hours. A discharge is regarded as complex when it can only take place following the implementation of a significant home based or other community based service, including residential or nursing home services.

At 4th February 2016, there were 5 patients in the Northern HSC Trust and 6 patients in the Western HSC Trust whose discharge from hospital had been delayed longer than the agreed 48 hours, due to a lack of available nursing home, residential home or EMI (Elderly Mentally Infirm) beds.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the future expansion possibilities built into the Banbridge Health and Care Centre, including the possibility of mobile MRI scanning facilities.

(AQW 53787/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Banbridge HCC building includes an expansion strategy to enable additional accommodation to be built on the roof of the building (at level 1), which would allow for the provision of additional clinical and treatment room accommodation should future demand require this.

Banbridge HCC also includes dedicated external space for the provision of a mobile MRI scanner to link into the main building. The parking area is in close proximity to the bookable clinical suite of accommodation which allows for a dedicated entrance from the building to the mobile MRI scanner when in use.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has sourced in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 53802/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In 2008 the Department, along with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in the Republic of Ireland, applied for funding through the EU cross-border Interreg IVA Programme 2007 - 2013. The application was successful, and £25.5m was received to support the 'Putting Patients, Clients and Families First' (PPF) project, which required match funding from both Departments, with DHSSPS providing £4.445m over the duration of the project.

PPF projects were implemented across the border area, which included the geographical areas covered by the Western and Southern Health and Social Care Trusts. Projects consisted of 12 strands of activity:

- development of cross border acute hospital services – vascular, ENT, urology and ophthalmology;
- establishment of additional and new sexual health/GUM clinics in the border region;
- development of an Eating Disorder network in the border region;
- 'Time IVA Change' border regional alcohol project;
- improving outcomes for children and families (service planning);
- support for older people;
- citizenship for people with disabilities;
- tackling diabetes in high risk clients;
- prevention and management of childhood obesity;
- promoting social inclusion and tackling health inequalities;
- cross border workforce mobility (leadership development and cross border exchange of knowledge and skills); and
- 'Turning the Curve' autism support project.

More recently, the Interreg VA programme currently has €53m available for health projects. Final decisions on the allocation of funding to projects, including any required match funding from the Department, will be taken before the end summer 2016.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Diploma in Dental Hygiene offered by the Belfast School of Dentistry that was cancelled this year will be rescheduled for next year.
(AQW 53817/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Diploma in Dental Hygiene course at the Belfast School of Dental Hygiene has been suspended since the last intake in September 2011. The future need for any training of dental hygienists for Northern Ireland remains under review but there are no plans to commence any training in Belfast during the incoming academic year.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 51794/11-16, (i) to provide a response to part (iv) of the original question; and to detail (ii) how the suggested £100,000 saving will be achieved; (iii) whether he will publish the equality screening that was undertaken; and (iv) the outcome of the consultation with the service users and their families from Dromore and Gortin.

(AQW 53852/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Western HSC Trust does not anticipate any additional cost as all service users currently attending day care at Dromore and Gortin will be offered the same level of day care in alternative locations.
- (ii) The Western HSC Trust will endeavour to meet the 2015/16 Health and Social Care Board's £100,000 savings target through the following actions:
 - Realignment of funded budgets to actual contract values for contracted out day care services;
 - Funding contracted out provider services to actual current utilisation levels; and
 - Funding of statutory day care to a level that is breakeven.
- (iii) The equality screening document is available on the Western HSC Trust's internet site at the following link: <http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net/about/1595.htm>
- (iv) The Western HSC Trust consulted widely on its proposals. The outcome of its consultation was published in July 2015. In addition, the Trust held a number of meetings with service users and their families/carers in Dromore and Gortin at the end of November/ beginning of December 2015.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people with a learning disability in each Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by age and the type of learning disability, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 53854/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally and was therefore requested from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses can be found detailed in the tables below.

Belfast HSC Trust

Table 1. Adults and Children with a Learning Disability in the Belfast HSC Trust by Age

Year	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st March 2015	400	1,816	2,216
As at 31st March 2014	317	1,841	2,158

Year	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st March 2013	331	1,824	2,155

Information by type of learning disability is not available.

Northern HSC Trust

Table 3. Adults and Children with a Learning Disability in the Northern HSC Trust by Age

Year	Type of disability	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st March 2015	Learning Disability	117	1,023	1,140
	Severe Learning Disability	190	331	521
	Severe Mental Impairment	6	27	33
	Statementing by E&LB	28	31	59
	Unclassified	19	200	219
	Total	360	1,612	1,972
As at 31st March 2014	Learning Disability	122	1,038	1,160
	Severe Learning Disability	186	338	524
	Severe Mental Impairment	6	28	34
	Statementing by E&LB	27	32	59
	Unclassified	19	218	237
	Total	360	1,654	2,014
As at 31st March 2013	Learning Disability	140	1,077	1,217
	Severe Learning Disability	204	334	538
	Severe Mental Impairment	6	31	37
	Statementing by E&LB	30	34	64
	Unclassified	20	221	241
	Total	400	1,697	2,097

South Eastern HSC Trust

Table 4. Adults and Children with a Learning Disability in the South Eastern HSC Trust by Age

Year	Type of disability	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st December 2015	Learning Disability	278	787	1,065
	Severe Learning Disability	149	461	610
	Severe Mental Impairment	0	49	49
	Statementing by E&LB	24	163	187
	Unclassified	20	71	91
	Total	471	1,531	2,002
As at 31st December 2014	Learning Disability	276	779	1,055
	Severe Learning Disability	145	456	601
	Severe Mental Impairment	0	49	49
	Statementing by E&LB	33	155	188
	Unclassified	22	72	94
	Total	476	1,511	1,987

Year	Type of disability	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st December 2013	Learning Disability	281	769	1,050
	Severe Learning Disability	142	465	607
	Severe Mental Impairment	0	49	49
	Statementing by E&LB	35	154	189
	Unclassified	21	79	100
	Total		479	1,516

Southern HSC Trust

Table 5. Adults with a Learning Disability in the Southern HSC Trust

Year	18+
As at 31st December 2015	1,933
As at 31st December 2014	2,041
As at 31st December 2013	2,002

Information by type of learning disability and information for those under the age of 18 is not available.

Western HSC Trust

Table 6. Adults and Children with a Learning Disability in the Western HSC Trust

Year	0-17	18+	Total
As at 31st March 2015	888	1,839	2,727
As at 31st March 2014	933	1,801	2,734
As at 31st March 2013	976	1,788	2,764

Information by type of learning disability is not available.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the compliance with the legislation outlawing cigarette vending machines.

(AQW 53949/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Legislation banning the sale of tobacco products from vending machines was introduced in Northern Ireland in March 2012. The aim behind the legislation is to prevent the sale of tobacco to young people from this particular source.

Although compliance with the legislation has not been formally evaluated by my Department, district council enforcement officers have not recorded any breaches of the ban to date.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of free prescriptions that have been processed in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53965/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All primary care prescriptions have been free since April 2010. The number of prescription forms and the number of prescription items that have been dispensed in each of the last three financial years are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Number of prescription forms and prescription items dispensed, 2012/13 to 2014/15

Financial Year	Number of Prescription Forms	Number of Prescription Items
2012/13	21,355,720	37,903,466
2013/14	21,696,492	38,824,357
2014/15	22,453,779	40,055,762

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what extra resources he is putting into respite care for parents.

(AQW 53966/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board has provided additional allocations in 2014/2015, 2015/2016 totalling £7.5m for children with disability and complex needs.

During 2015/16 the Board also allocated a sum of £0.249m for in year purchase of additional short breaks (respite) for adults with a learning disability.

I have also secured additional funding for the Family Fund in year of 784k which means the Family Fund received its full funding allocation of £1.57m in 2015/2016.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the funding his Department has allocated to the East Derry constituency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53978/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Funding is not provided on a constituency basis, nor does my Department capture or hold this information centrally. The level of detail requested can therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the underlying reasons for the change to contracts impacting on 8 statutory domiciliary care staff in the Sion Mills and Newtown Stewart areas within the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53989/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: This change to contracts is part of the Western Health and Social Care Trust's homecare reform programme which is currently being implemented across the Trust's catchment area. This new service model encompasses localised care teams, geographically spread throughout the Trust, with repeat and standardised working patterns and dedicated shift patterns and guaranteed hours for staff. This is the second phase of reform in this service, which has already been successfully implemented in the Londonderry, Limavady and Dungiven areas.

The Trust will meet with each staff member impacted by the change with the aim of securing their regular working hours within the reformed service delivery model for homecare services.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with regard to proposed contract changes to statutory domiciliary care workers in Sion Mills and Newtown Stewart, to detail to where the eight staff impacted will be relocated.

(AQW 53990/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: This change to contracts is part of the Western Health and Social Care Trust's homecare reform programme which is currently being implemented across the Trust's catchment area. This new service model encompasses localised care teams, geographically spread throughout the Trust, with repeat and standardised working patterns and dedicated shift patterns and guaranteed hours for staff. This is the second phase of reform in this service, which has already been successfully implemented in the Londonderry, Limavady and Dungiven areas.

The Trust will meet with each staff member impacted by the change with the aim of securing their regular working hours within the reformed service delivery model for homecare services.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department has spent on all domiciliary care services broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53996/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The amount spent on domiciliary care services in each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, is set out in the table below.

	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Total
2012/13	£41,176,233	£48,250,782	£46,814,094	£46,473,544	£31,018,261	£213,732,914
2013/14	£41,053,869	£50,230,320	£48,723,020	£48,724,758	£33,931,638	£222,663,606
2014/15	£40,251,922	£51,196,726	£51,263,538	£46,903,374	£34,929,743	£224,545,302

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the announcement by the Public Health Agency on 8 February 2016 that approximately 150 cases of Swine Flu have been reported in Northern Ireland in the last four weeks, to outline the immediate action he is taking to address this issue.

(AQW 54008/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Every year, during the winter period, several strains of seasonal influenza virus circulate in the community. In 2009 a new strain emerged. This is known as influenza A - H1N1. In 2009 it was often called "swine flu". Since 2009 influenza A - H1N1 has become one of the common seasonal flu viruses in circulation, both globally and here in Northern Ireland and therefore it is not unexpected to have this number of cases of this particular strain at this time of year.

The latest statistics for Northern Ireland show that in the week ending 31 January 2016, there were 31.7 per 100,000 population accessing primary care with flu-like illness. This is well below the threshold that indicates the start of significant influenza circulation in the community. The threshold is 49.4 per 100,000 population.

The main defence in place against the effects of seasonal flu is the annual vaccination programme. Each year the seasonal flu vaccine is designed to protect against the strains that are expected to be most prevalent. Since 2010, the annual seasonal flu vaccine has included protection against influenza A - H1N1. The vaccine is offered free to everyone over 65; to pre-school children aged between two and four years; to all primary school-aged children, and to people who are in designated "at risk" groups, such as pregnant women and people with underlying health conditions like asthma or heart conditions.

I would therefore strongly encourage anyone in these groups who has not yet received their flu vaccination to contact their GP to arrange an appointment.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding he has provided to the community and voluntary sector (i) in actual terms; and (ii) as a proportion of his overall budget, in each of the last three years, including the projected spend for the current financial year.

(AQW 54053/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below shows funding provided by my Department to the voluntary and community sector. Funding is also provided to the sector by Health and Social Care bodies.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Funding to V&C sector	£5.1m	£5.05m	£5.05m
Total DHSSPS Budget	£4.5bn	£4.6bn	£4.8bn
% Total DHSSPS Budget	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%

* Figures may not add due to roundings.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of his Department's spend in East Antrim in each year since 2010.

(AQW 54092/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Funding is not provided on a constituency basis, nor does my Department capture or hold this information centrally. The level of detail requested can therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what changes have been made to how departmental funding is allocated to the community and voluntary sector over the last three years; and to outline the reasons for any such change.

(AQW 54250/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There have been no changes to the way core administrative grant funding is allocated to community and voluntary sector organisations by my Department over the last three years.

However, increasing use of procurement across the HSC, potential State Aid implications and the need to ensure an equal playing field means it has become necessary to end the current core funding scheme which is limited to only 67 voluntary and community organisations. Core funding will be phased out during 2016/17 and 2017/18. The voluntary and community organisations currently in receipt of a core grant can apply for 75% of their 2015/16 allocation in 2016/17, and 50% in 2017/18.

A new DHSSPS Innovation Grant Scheme will launch for the voluntary and community sector in 2016/17.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to details the average length of time individuals have been waiting in excess of the scheduled end of a reablement care plan for the initiation of a full care package, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, for each month in the last three years.

(AQW 54343/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the average time waiting for a permanent care package to be implemented following discharge from the reablement service is not held centrally and was therefore requested from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Several trusts have advised that the information is not routinely collected and could only be obtained through a manual trawl, at disproportionate cost.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how his Department is improving health provision for people living with Multiple Sclerosis.

(AQW 54357/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Work is continuing by the Health and Social Care Board with a range of stakeholders across Northern Ireland to agree a service specification for MS services, consistent with NICE guidelines, towards making best use of current service capacity and agreeing priorities for development, subject to the availability of resources, in the coming years.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the regional care pathway for the termination of a pregnancy; and (ii) the way in which local medical practitioners assess whether there is a serious and long term risk to the physical or mental health of a woman in the continuation of a pregnancy.

(AQW 54430/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Clinicians will tailor the care they provide to address the specific needs of the woman. Clinical judgement will be required by medical practitioners when assessing whether the potential adverse effect of continuing the pregnancy is likely to be a threat to the life of the woman or her long term physical or mental health. Each case requires careful and sensitive assessment. Health professionals are therefore encouraged to seek specialist support as required to aid decision making.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail any communication he has had with Garvagh Care Home since the announcement of its closure; (ii) what support his Department has provided to families and staff on the resettlement of residents; and (iii) for an update on the resettlement of residents in alternative facilities.

(AQW 54473/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials in the Health and Social Care Board have had detailed discussions with Four Seasons Health Care about the closures of the Four Seasons care homes, including Garvagh.

My Department established a joint working group with the Health and Social Care Board, the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority to monitor developments and oversee the resettlement of the residents affected by the closure; within Trusts multi disciplinary teams were set up to work through the detail of all the moves, to identify new placements and to manage the terms of the moves.

As at 19 February there were 12 residents remaining in Garvagh Care Home. There were no residents remaining in the other homes affected by the closures.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail waiting lists in (a) Northern Ireland; and (b) the South West Acute Hospital to assess patient referrals to Occupational Therapy; and to detail the reason for these waiting times.

(AQW 54500/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) At the 31st December 2015, there were 9,638 patients across Northern Ireland waiting to access Occupational Therapy services.
- (b) At the 31st December 2015, there were 542 patients in the South West Acute Hospital waiting to access Occupational Therapy services.

It is regrettable that an increasing number of people are waiting to be seen but the demand for Occupational Therapy services currently exceeds the regional capacity and this had led to lengthening waiting times.

The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency are working in collaboration with Trusts to complete a Demand and Capacity exercise for AHP services, including Occupational Therapy. This is to ensure that there is sufficient elective capacity within the AHP workforce to meet patient demand within the Ministerial 13 week target.

The outcome of this exercise is informing decisions on where funding should be targeted in order to address identified capacity gaps within Trusts. To date, this has resulted in funding four additional posts in Occupational Therapy services in the Western Trust.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of times Fire Stations in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Portrush; (iv) Portstewart; (v) Kilrea; and (vi) Dungiven have not met their GARTAN availability target times in the last two years.

(AQW 54527/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service introduced the GARTAN Electronic Retained Availability system in April 2014. The table below details the number of identified breaches of Retained Duty System availability targets at Coleraine, Limavady, Portrush, Portstewart, Kilrea and Dungiven Stations during the period April 2014 to January 2016.

Station	1st Appliance	2nd Appliance	Total
Coleraine	18	470	488
Limavady	495	1,428	1,923
Portrush	14	726	740
Portstewart	148	1,345	1,493
*Kilrea	263	N/A	263
*Dungiven	120	N/A	120

* Station with one appliance

NIFRS' Regional Control Centre continually monitors Retained availability. Where there is inadequate Retained availability which may result in a failure to respond, crews are mobilised immediately from neighbouring Stations.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the support his Department is providing for people with alcohol addiction problems in Upper Bann.

(AQW 54562/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) commission and provide a wide range of services for those who misuse alcohol and/or drugs. These services include education, information, and awareness raising, brief/early interventions, harm reduction, community based treatment and support, and access to a regional network of inpatient detoxification and rehabilitation services.

Specific services/service providers in the area include:

- the Community Addiction Team operated by the SHSCT;
- community youth treatment services provided by Dunlewey Addiction Services;
- outreach/low threshold/harm reduction provided by Extern; and
- support for children of substance misusing parents or carers (hidden harm) provided by Barnardo's;

GPs will also provide advice, brief interventions, treatment/support and referrals to specialist services if required. The majority of people are seen and treated in the community and the SHSCT holds Addiction clinics in Brownlow Health Centre, Portadown Health Centre, Craigavon Area Hospital, Banbridge Health Centre, Moylin House Craigavon. People are usually offered a venue closest to their home, if that is suitable for the individual.

In addition, SHSCT, in association with The Big Lottery, has also developed a network of community services to assist those with substance misuse issues. These services work in conjunction with the statutory sector and provide open access and referral pathways to specific targeted interventions, including:

- Midwifery Liaison Service providing services for women during their pregnancy, based in Craigavon Area Hospital with a Trust-wide remit;
- Alcohol Liaison Services for those people who find themselves admitted to a General Hospital in both Craigavon Area Hospital and Daisy Hill Hospital;
- Chronic long-term hard-to-reach substance misusers, providing advice and support to people who find it difficult to engage with statutory services based in De Paul agency in Dungannon providing services on a Trust-wide basis;
- Adult counselling service for substance misusers based with Dunlewey Substance Misuse Service in Portadown; and
- Women's Aid providing services to women misusing alcohol or drugs, based in Newry providing services to victims of abuse from the Trust area.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the services available at the new Ballymena Health and Care Centre.

(AQW 54629/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I was pleased to officially open the new £25 million Health and Care Centre in Ballymena on 18 February 2016. The Centre, which is the largest in Northern Ireland to date, brings together primary care professionals from a range of disciplines, including GPs, to provide enhanced services that are accessible and responsive to client and patient needs.

The Health and Care Centre provides accommodation for six GP practices and a local pharmacy, as well as a mix of locally accessible acute, primary and community care clinics. These include direct referral diagnostic services such as X ray and ultrasound; district nursing and community nurse specialist services such as diabetes and continence; podiatry and physiotherapy services; the wheelchair assessment service and Occupational Therapy service, including an 'aids to daily living service'. Other services include acute outpatients clinics e.g. ophthalmology, antenatal, respiratory, rheumatology; and a community dental service as well as mental health and learning disability teams. There is also a separate children's wing for all child associated assessments and clinics. Other Trust-wide services and teams will 'in reach' with clinics e.g. psychological therapies and the Eating Disorder Team.

The building was handed over to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in November 2015. Some services have yet to transfer but it is envisaged that the building will become fully operational by the end of March 2016.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting figures for audiology including the (i) number of patients currently waiting from referral to assessment (ii) the number of patients waiting from assessment to treatment or being fitted with hearing aids, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area ; and (iii) in both cases, for a separate breakdown of figures for those currently waiting within the target waiting time and those that have been waiting longer.

(AQW 54633/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The 2015/16 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target states that, from April 2015, no patient should wait longer than nine weeks for a diagnostic test. There is an Indicator of Performance to monitor the number of hearing aids fitted within 13 weeks. Information in respect of these waiting times can be found in the tables below.

Table 1. Number of people currently waiting for audiology services, from referral to assessment.

HSC Trust	Total waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks
Belfast	216	36
Northern	895	636
South Eastern	1,307	852
Southern	546	0
Western	470	81
Northern Ireland	3,434	1,605

All figures provided relate to the position as at 31st January 2016, excluding the Northern HSC Trust who provided a position as at 23rd February 2016 and the Belfast HSC Trust who provided a position as at 26th February 2016.

Table 2. Number of people waiting for audiology services, from assessment to treatment.

HSC Trust	Total waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks
Belfast	41	0
Northern	513	229
South Eastern	767	86
Southern	256	0
Western	328	28
Northern Ireland	1,905	343

All figures provided relate to the position as at 31st January 2016, excluding the Northern HSC Trust who provided a position as at 23rd February 2016 and the Belfast HSC Trust who provided a position as at 26th February 2016.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans on increasing out-of-hour GP services in Omagh and Strabane.

(AQW 54689/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Out of hours services are available for the population of Omagh and Strabane from 6pm each weekday evening and 24 hours on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. The provider of these services, Western Urgent Care, aims to ensure services are available from all bases seven days a week. However, at times it is necessary to consolidate services across a smaller number of bases in the interests of patient and staff safety. On occasions when this is necessary, all patients contacting the out of hours service continue to be triaged by and receive advice from an experienced nurse or GP, but may be asked to attend another base.

I continue to take action to ensure the sustainability of out of hours services across Northern Ireland. Up to £3.1m of additional funding has been made available in 2015/16 to increase capacity in out of hours services and a further £850,000 has been provided in-year to help providers meet increased demand for services over the winter months.

I also recently announced an investment of £1.2m per year to create an additional 20 GP training places. This is the largest investment in GP training for more than ten years and will increase the number of GP trainees to 85 per year from August 2016. In addition, schemes have been introduced aimed at encouraging GPs who have left practice in Northern Ireland to return and supporting the existing GP workforce to remain in practice.

In October I established a working group to consider the actions needed to safeguard the sustainability of GP services into the future, and to ensure that people across Northern Ireland can continue to access high quality GP-led care, both in hours and out of hours. I expect to receive the working group's report within the coming weeks and will give careful consideration to its findings and recommendations.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how much of his current budget is assigned to deal with drug and alcohol abuse; and (ii) whether any of the Health and Social Care Trusts are addressing these issues.

(AQW 54716/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs (NSD) Phase 2, my Department allocates approximately £8 million each year towards preventing and addressing the harms caused by alcohol and drug misuse. Almost £6 million of this is invested through the Public Health Agency (PHA) in local communities, for example in young people's counselling services, community support workers, etc.

Additional funding of around £8 million is allocated by my Department through the mental health budget for the provision of statutory alcohol and drug treatment and support services by all five Health & Social Care Trusts in partnership with the PHA

and the Health and Social Care Board. This includes the operation of Community Addiction Teams/Services and access to a regional network of inpatient detoxification and rehabilitation services.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of prisoners in (i) Maghaberry; (ii) Magilligan; and (iii) Hydebank are prescribed medication for mental health related illnesses.

(AQW 54743/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to provide a fully accurate assessment of the percentage of prisoners prescribed medication for mental health related illnesses as information is retained on the basis of the medication rather than the specific condition.

At 29 February the percentage of prisoners in (i) Maghaberry; (ii) Magilligan; and (iii) Hydebank that are prescribed either an antidepressant medication, a medication used in treating psychoses and related disorders or an anxiolytic or hypnotic medication for mental health related illnesses is detailed below.

HMP Maghaberry	52 %
HMP Magilligan	52%
HMP/YOC Hydebank Wood	49%.

The figures exclude patients treated for anxiety with beta-blockers or gabapentinoids as these medications have other therapeutic indications.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what action his Department is taking to address psychoactive substance abuse in West Tyrone.

(AQW 54760/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: New Psychoactive Substances were an emerging issue in the overall strategy to prevent and address the harm related to substance misuse in Northern Ireland, the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2. The strategy focuses on reducing the supply and accessibility of these substances and also reducing demand through education and awareness raising, early intervention, harm reduction, and treatment and support.

Individuals who attend substance misuse services, whether community/voluntary providers for the provision of substance misuse treatment services, or from health professionals either in primary or secondary care settings, will be dealt with according to their assessed clinical needs, irrespective of the substances being misused.

The new round of Commissioning for Drugs and Alcohol Services has recently been completed by the Public Health Agency and the use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) has been addressed as an integral part of the service delivery going forward. A wide range of drug and alcohol services have been put in place to cover the Foyle and West Tyrone areas. These include: community-based services for young people identified as having substance misuse difficulties; community-based early identification services for adults; targeted education and prevention services for young people; and low threshold services to provide support for those with dependence on alcohol and/or drugs who are unwilling or unable to avail of treatment services.

In addition, the Connections Service provides a local resource in the Western Trust area to the support the promotion of information, services and partnership working through the Western Drug & Alcohol Co-ordination Team to address substance misuse issues across the community, ensuring that information on NPS and access to appropriate services are actively promoted.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of staff that have availed of the Voluntary Exit Scheme in each tranche in (i) his Department; and (ii) in each of its arm's-length bodies; including (a) their grade; and (b) whether they were part-time or full-time staff.

(AQW 54771/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information on staff who have availed of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme by grade is available on the Department of Finance and Personnel and Personnel (DFP) website at:-

<https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/publications/ves-scheme-analysis>

The published information does not include staff broken down by part-time or full-time. The table below details the figures for DHSSPS:-

	TR 1		TR 2		TR 3		TR 4	
	F/T	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T	P/T
Total	10	12	7	11	8	7	1	2

The details requested in relation to those Departmental arm's-length bodies who are participating in Voluntary Exit Schemes as at 15 February 2016 are as follows:-

Organisation	Number of people who have availed of the scheme	Grades	Full-time	Part-time
Health and Social Care Board	10	1 x Band 2 5 x Band 4 1 x Band 5 2 x Band 6 1 x Band 8A	6	4
Public Health Agency	10	1 x Band 3 2 x Band 4 1 x Band 6 2 x Band 7 1 x Band 8A 1 x Band 8B 2 x Band 8C	6	4
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	1	1 x Band 6	0	1
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	4	1 x Band 6 2 x Band 3 1 x Band 2	1	3
Western Health and Social Care Trust	2	1 x Band 8a 1 x Band 7	2	0
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	1	1 x Band 8b	1	0
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	0	-	0	0
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	0	-	0	0
Business Services Organisation	5	1 x Band 8a 1 x Band 3 3 x Band 5	5	0
Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency	0	-	0	0
Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council	0	-	0	0
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service	1	1 x Scale 1	0	1

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people in receipt of domiciliary care services in North Down, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54803/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of clients in receipt of domiciliary care in North Down is not held centrally and was therefore requested from the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

The South Eastern HSC Trust was unable to provide information for the North Down Assembly Area. However, information on the number of clients in receipt of domiciliary care in the North Down and Ards sector of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is available and can be found in the table below.

Table 1. Number of clients in receipt of domiciliary care in the North Down and Ards sector of the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Date	Number of clients
31/03/2011	2,454
31/03/2012	2,634
31/03/2013	2,707
31/03/2014	2,732
31/03/2015	2,864
31/01/2016	3,033

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been detained under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54860/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people detained under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 is not available. However, information is available on the number of compulsory admissions (detentions) to hospital under the 1986 Order in each of the last three years, and is detailed below. It is important to note that the information below refers to admissions (detentions) and not to patients, as a patient may be detained more than once during the year.

Year	No. of Detentions
2012/13	1,113
2013/14	1,054
2014/15	1,045

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to educate people on the dangers of gout.

(AQW 54864/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Educating people on the dangers of gout is not identified as one of the priority areas of work for the Public Health Agency (PHA). However, a range of lifestyle behaviours can help to reduce the risk of further attacks of gout among those suffering from the condition and as a result, much of the work undertaken by the PHA to encourage and promote a healthy weight and the adoption of healthy eating patterns, particularly through the Choose to Live Better campaign, is likely to have an impact on recurrence of gout and help inform people of this issue. In addition, drinking too much alcohol can increase the risk of gout and in January 2016 the four UK Chief Medical Officers published new alcohol guidelines to help people make informed choices about their alcohol consumption.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has considered introducing local Admiral Care Nurses.

(AQW 54890/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland the Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative was launched in September 2014. The initiative aims to improve the quality of care and support for people living with dementia and their families. Part of this work programme includes the recruitment of Dementia Navigators across HSC Trusts. Dementia Navigators will act as a single point of contact for people living with dementia and their carers to provide support and advice throughout the entire dementia journey from diagnosis to end of life. The role will be similar to that of an Admiral Nurse, although Dementia Navigator posts may be filled by qualified staff from a nursing or social care background.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any oversight his Department has with reference to the manual handling policies of private care organisations.

(AQW 54899/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department's regulations and standards, which underpin the work undertaken by health and social care services in the regulated sector, require registered persons of private care organisations to ensure that staff members are suitably trained, qualified, skilled and experienced in a range of areas, including in manual handling.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) use the regulations, standards and guidance in its registration and inspection of regulated services. When mandatory training within a regulated service is examined during an inspection, RQIA will assess the evidence available to determine if the service has met the requirements for staff. The evidence will include the provision of information, training, supervision and monitoring of staff practices.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Minister for Education to develop mental health programmes within the school curriculum, that are supported by resources that promote positive mental health programmes in schools.

(AQW 54900/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Progress on joint working between the Department for Education, my Department and the Public Health Agency, on the implementation of a whole school approach to promoting mental and emotional wellbeing, was discussed at the 29 February meeting of Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention. I chaired this meeting and the majority of Ministers participated, including the Minister for Education.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what requirements his Department places on private care organisations training their staff in manual handling.

(AQW 54949/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department's regulations and Care Standards require registered persons of private care organisations to ensure that staff members are suitably trained, qualified, skilled and experienced in a range of areas, including in manual handling.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) has developed guidance to assist registered persons of regulated services to meet legislative requirements as outlined in the Department's regulations and Care Standards. The guidance sets out the recommended frequency of training and the staff grade/level to which it should be directed.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to mitigate the impact on the Health Service of the large number of GP retirements expected over the next five years.

(AQO 9829/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have taken a number of steps to prepare for the fact that a proportion of the existing GP workforce may choose to retire over the coming years.

I recently announced an investment of £1.2m each year to commission an additional 20 GP training places, starting in 2016/17. This is the largest investment in GP training for more than ten years and will increase the number of GP trainees to 85 per year from August 2016. In December I announced a 5-year investment initiative that will put close to 300 pharmacists in GP practices by 2021, easing pressure on GPs and ensuring that patients continue to receive a high quality service. In addition, as part of an investment package of up to £5.1m in 2015/16, new schemes have been introduced aimed at encouraging GPs who have left practice in Northern Ireland to return and supporting the existing GP workforce to remain in practice.

In October last year I established a working group to review GP-led care and to make recommendations aimed at ensuring the future sustainability of GP services. This working group has considered a range of issues, including the recruitment and retention of GPs and how best to support the existing GP workforce. The group is currently finalising its report and I expect to receive a copy within the next few days. I will of course give careful consideration to its findings and recommendations.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the £40m allocated to ease pressures on waiting lists.

(AQO 9826/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The delivery of the substantial volume of activity in the time available since the additional funding was confirmed represents a considerable challenge for both Trusts and Independent Sector providers, but I am pleased to say that this is progressing well.

Most patients will be seen during January to March this year, with many having already being seen and treated or notified of their appointments, including those waiting for orthopaedics, gastroenterology, neurology, ENT, general surgery and dermatology.

By late February, nearly 30,000 outpatients referrals for assessment, along with more than 6,000 direct referrals for treatment had been sent to the Independent Sector to progress

Alongside this, work is also continuing in house to progress additional new and review outpatient appointments including those for Allied Health Professionals, carry out additional diagnostic activity, admit patients for treatment and also reduce waiting times in the community in areas such as autism, psychological therapies, Children and Adult Mental Health Services and wheelchairs

Robust performance management arrangements are in place and provisional figures for February 2016 show that those waiting more than 18 weeks for an outpatient appointment have fallen by 6% and those waiting longer than 26 weeks for an inpatient day case has fallen by 13%.

On Sunday, I announced the allocation of an additional £30m of additional funding to continue to tackle waiting lists. This further £30 million follows the Executive's earlier allocation of £40 million. The combined £70 million will ensure in the region of 150,000 extra assessments, tests and procedures are delivered.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of people eligible for the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme have availed of the scheme since its introduction.

(AQO 9830/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to quantify the total number of people eligible to apply for reimbursement of travel costs through the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme.

The Scheme is well publicised across all patient facilities in Health and Social Care and we have no evidence that eligible patients are not taking-up the Scheme to any significant extent.

Total payments made under the scheme in 2013/14 were £1.369m, in 2014/15 expenditure amounted to £1.288m and in the current year to date expenditure is £1.24m.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the work of the Expert Panel on the configuration of Health and Social Care services.

(AQO 9834/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Expert Panel began its work in January. Professor Rafael Bengoa and the Panel have met with a wide range of political, community and clinical stakeholders since then.

A political summit was held on 17th February. The purpose of the summit was to consider the principles that should underpin the future model of health and social care in Northern Ireland. This was a very constructive discussion featuring representatives from each of the main parties and I aim to publish a copy of the Panel's recommended working principles in the near future.

The next phase of the Panel's work will be to develop a new health and social care model for Northern Ireland, guided by the principles.

This is a clinically led process to advise us what services the people of Northern Ireland should expect from their Health and Social Care system. The panel brings together local expertise and an international perspective to this challenging but essential piece of work.

The appointment of this Expert Panel is a key step in my ambition to deliver a world class Health and Social Care system for the people of Northern Ireland. That is the prize in front of us and the challenge is for all of us to embrace the necessary change that will make this a reality.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the steps he has taken to improve care for people with diabetes.
(AQO 9835/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Diabetes is one of the most challenging chronic conditions facing the people of Northern Ireland. There are currently approximately 85,000 people in Northern Ireland living with diabetes.

In 2014, my predecessor Edwin Poots published a Review of Care for people with diabetes which highlighted that whilst there was much the Health and Social Care system could be proud of; there were still many areas of concern which needed improvement.

Therefore I have built on the recommendations of the review and have published a draft Diabetes Strategic Framework for Diabetes which has been issued for public consultation which directly addresses those recommendations as well as taking us confidently into the future so we can provide "world class" and innovative care for people living with Diabetes in Northern Ireland.

The draft Diabetes Strategic Framework will directly promote a partnership approach to service design in the spirit of "Transforming Your Care". There are also actions within the Framework which will support self-management and encourage innovation in the service. I am also aware that we must utilise Public Health measures to greater effect to prevent Type 2 diabetes and delay the onset of complications.

The draft Diabetes Strategic Framework is now available for public consultation for a period of twelve weeks.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the extra costs incurred by his Department as a result of the Trauma Centre building at the Royal Victoria Hospital not meeting the required standards.
(AQO 9836/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As a result of a defect to pipe work within the building, the Critical Care building was handed over to the Trust in April 2015, some two and a half years after the original planned date.

Resolution of the defective pipe work is expected to cost £9.5m and this has been funded by the contractor. In addition, the Trust has incurred £1.9m of costs in respect of professional support and advice which they expect to be recovered under the terms of the contract. There is therefore no extra cost to the Trust of addressing this delay.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will address the backlog in the Western Health and Social Care Trust's GP out-of-hours service.
(AQO 9837/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The GP Out-of-Hours service in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area is provided by Western Urgent Care, one of 5 Out of Hours providers in Northern Ireland. The service is provided across five bases—Altnagelvin, Enniskillen, Limavady, Omagh and Strabane.

Like all Out of Hours providers in Northern Ireland, Western Urgent Care faces increasing challenges in providing a full service due to increasing demand and difficulty in filling shifts. This can lead to unpredictable GP availability making it difficult on occasion to reliably fill GP rotas.

Western Urgent Care aims to provide a service at all bases, 7 days a week. However, increasing demand and difficulty filling shifts mean that at times it is necessary to consolidate and prioritise resources in the interests of patient and staff safety.

The availability of Out of Hours services in the Trust area is monitored daily by Western Urgent Care staff.

When a GP is unavailable at a local base, Western Urgent Care will seek to move a GP from another base to carry out a booked appointments session and so to ensure that patients can continue to be seen locally. Patients contacting the service

after a booked appointments session may be asked to attend another base. Home visits continue to be carried out as normal where clinically necessary.

It should be noted that there has been no increase in adverse incidents as a result of this need to prioritise bases.

Western Urgent Care, with support from HSCB, has implemented a number of initiatives in order to provide a safe service, increase GP capacity and fill shifts.

A Local Enhanced Service is in place in the Western HSC Trust area with 12 GP practices contracted to provide a total of 250 evening surgeries in the Altnagelvin Out of Hours centre.

My Department and the Health and Social Care Board have been working with Out of Hours providers to address the challenges facing the service.

In 2014/15, an additional £1.5m was invested to support the provision of GP Out of Hours services. Building on this, in 2015/16 an additional £3.1m has been made available to help build capacity in GP Out of Hours services. A further £1.1m has been made available to help out of hours providers meet increased demand for services over the winter months and the forthcoming Easter period.

At a strategic level, my Department has been leading a review of GP Out of Hours services across Northern Ireland. The review will identify good practice and opportunities to improve service provision within existing resources. The review report is being finalised and I will give careful consideration to its findings and recommendations.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the work of the Expert Panel on the configuration of Health and Social Care services.

(AQO 9838/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Expert Panel began its work in January. Professor Rafael Bengoa and the Panel have met with a wide range of political, community and clinical stakeholders since then.

A political summit was held on 17th February. The purpose of the summit was to consider the principles that should underpin the future model of health and social care in Northern Ireland. This was a very constructive discussion featuring representatives from each of the main parties and I aim to publish a copy of the Panel's recommended working principles in the near future.

The next phase of the Panel's work will be to develop a new health and social care model for Northern Ireland, guided by the principles.

This is a clinically led process to advise us what services the people of Northern Ireland should expect from their Health and Social Care system. The panel brings together local expertise and an international perspective to this challenging but essential piece of work.

The appointment of this Expert Panel is a key step in my ambition to deliver a world class Health and Social Care system for the people of Northern Ireland. That is the prize in front of us and the challenge is for all of us to embrace the necessary change that will make this a reality.

Department of Justice

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice, following the recent settlement of the Legal Aid dispute, for an estimate of the annual legal aid bill in the 2016-17 financial year.

(AQW 54600/11-16)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): As the Legal Services Agency is currently working on its forecast for 2016/17 an estimate of the annual legal aid bill for 2016/17 is not currently available. The new forecast will include the resolution of the Crown Court remuneration dispute and the anticipated timescales for the disposal of cases currently before the Crown Court. The new forecast will inform the next Monitoring Round.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Justice what is the statutory definition of elder abuse.

(AQW 54601/11-16)

Mr Ford: The term 'elder abuse' is not a legal term and is not used in the statute of criminal law, rather it appears to be a general term which describes actions or neglect across the spectrum of care that leads to harm of older people. The abuse can be physical, sexual, financial or material, including theft from the abused person, neglect or discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability or other form of harassment.

I have no plans to introduce specific criminal legislation targeted at protecting only older people. The statutory framework of laws in place designed to protect people from all forms of criminal activity apply equally to the protection of older people as to anyone else.

There are also provisions designed to protect vulnerable groups, including vulnerable adults, which is a legal term defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. This legislation, and other aspects of protecting older people from abuse, falls within the responsibility of the Health Minister.

My Department is also undertaking a review of sentencing policy issues which will include looking at sentencing for particular categories of crime such as crimes against older and vulnerable people. The review will report in 2017.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Justice whether there are any plans to introduce adult protection legislation.
(AQW 54602/11-16)

Mr Ford: The term 'elder abuse' is not a legal term and is not used in the statute of criminal law, rather it appears to be a general term which describes actions or neglect across the spectrum of care that leads to harm of older people. The abuse can be physical, sexual, financial or material, including theft from the abused person, neglect or discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability or other form of harassment.

I have no plans to introduce specific criminal legislation targeted at protecting only older people. The statutory framework of laws in place designed to protect people from all forms of criminal activity apply equally to the protection of older people as to anyone else.

There are also provisions designed to protect vulnerable groups, including vulnerable adults, which is a legal term defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. This legislation, and other aspects of protecting older people from abuse, falls within the responsibility of the Health Minister.

My Department is also undertaking a review of sentencing policy issues which will include looking at sentencing for particular categories of crime such as crimes against older and vulnerable people. The review will report in 2017.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Justice (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.
(AQW 54683/11-16)

Mr Ford: I refer the Member to the response I gave to his Assembly Question on 22 February 2016, namely AQW/53914/11-16, detailing draw down from my Department since its establishment in April 2010. Of that draw down, I am unable to confirm if any has been spent in South Belfast.

Due to the nature of the Challenge Hate Crime project (money drawn down by the Northern Ireland Prison Service), it is impossible to provide a geographical breakdown of spend.

Of the money drawn down by Forensic Science Northern Ireland for the ROSFEN project, none was spent in South Belfast.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice what changes have been made to how departmental funding is allocated to the community and voluntary sector over the last three years; and to outline the reasons for any such change.
(AQW 54692/11-16)

Mr Ford: There has been no change in the approach applied by my Department in allocating funding to the community and voluntary sector for victims' services, nor to the approach applied to projects and initiatives which support rehabilitative front line services over the last three years, other than to reflect funding adjustments due to budget reductions.

In 2015-16 it was decided to introduce a phased reduction of core funding to three organisations by 25% per annum in order to minimise the impact of budget reductions on front line service delivery. This decision has since been reviewed and for the incoming year 2016-17, core funding provided by my Department to community and voluntary organisations will be reduced by 1.5% compared to the 2015-16 position.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions for cases of arson in (i) Belfast; and (ii) the rest of Northern Ireland, have been secured in the last two years; and whether he has any plans to review the sentencing guidelines for arson.
(AQW 54710/11-16)

Mr Ford: Offences relating to arson are prosecuted under Article 3 of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. The table provided gives the number of convictions for arson offences for the calendar years 2013 and 2014, the latest year for which data are available. Data have been provided for convictions handed down at courts in the Belfast Court Division, alongside numbers handed down in other Court Divisions, as details of where an offence occurred are not held as part of the convictions dataset held by my Department.

Guidelines on sentencing are not a matter for me as the Minister of Justice. In making sentencing decisions, judges are guided by guideline judgments from the Court of Appeal and by Magistrates Courts Sentencing Guidelines. The latter are produced by the Lord Chief Justice's Sentencing Group to enhance the guidance available to the judiciary, through oversight of the development and publication of sentencing guidelines.

Convictions for arson offences in Belfast Court Division and other Court Divisions, 2013 - 2014

Year	Belfast Court Division	Other Court Divisions	All Court Divisions
2013	22	43	65
2014	17	56	73

Note:

- 1 Figures relate to initial court disposals only. Results of cases brought to appeal are not included.
- 2 Figures relate to conviction for the offences in question, whether or not they were the primary offence at conviction.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice what percentage of prisoners in (i) Maghaberry; (ii) Magilligan; and (iii) Hydebank tested positive for illegal substances upon receiving their custodial sentence.

(AQW 54744/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not routinely carry out any drug testing on persons committed directly from courts to any prison in Northern Ireland.

Healthcare staff carry out screening of all committals to prisons on the day of committal; during this screening, should any person indicate that they have issues with substance abuse they will be referred to addiction services within the prison and an appropriate course of treatment will be recommended.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Justice to outline the action his Department is taking to address the number of burglaries in South Belfast.

(AQW 54773/11-16)

Mr Ford: My Department recognises the often devastating financial and psychological impact that burglary can have on both individuals and businesses across Northern Ireland and remains concerned about the recent increase in this particularly invasive type of acquisitive crime.

Although the number of burglaries has declined in recent years, the most recent figures for January 2016 continue to show an increase in comparison to the previous 12 months. In response, I supported the launch of a joint PSNI / PCSP domestic burglary campaign in Autumn 2015 and I fully support the major PSNI anti-burglary operation currently underway focussing on both domestic and non-domestic burglary across Northern Ireland.

I am aware that this operation will involve a range of actions that include vehicle check points, searches of premises, cash sniffer dogs and the provision of advice and information to householders and businesses. Whilst used largely in operations against organised crime, cash sniffer dogs are specially trained to detect large amounts of cash that may be concealed either on the person, in vehicles or in buildings and the PSNI plan to use them in the ongoing operation against burglary.

Moreover, the PSNI and PCSPs continue to provide crime prevention advice on how members of the public and local businesses can protect themselves, their properties and their belongings. In South Belfast, the local District PCSP continues to support the strategic work of the Belfast PCSP in tackling the issue of burglaries across the city.

My Department, through the PCSPs, has supported and will continue to support the PSNI's operational response through a range of initiatives that positively promote the protective measures that both individuals and businesses can take to guard against the recent trend in this particular type of criminal behaviour.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice what Supporting Prisoner at Risk training is given to prison officers for observation checks on prisoners, particularly initial conversations after coming on duty, identifying symptoms of concern and checks for signs of life.

(AQW 54776/11-16)

Mr Ford: Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) training has been delivered to all staff within the Northern Ireland Prison Service and across all establishments. Training covers all aspects of the SPAR document including the formulation and management of individual care plans, the content and reasons of accurate handovers at the completion of duties and the importance of routine but irregular observations.

SPAR training is also a mandatory curriculum subject for all new staff to the Northern Ireland Prison Service. This is completed by suitably trained staff during initial training.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) has been delivered to 529 staff within Maghaberry Prison. This educates staff in suicide and self-harm indicators and possible interventions. The major intervention for NIPS staff is through the SPAR document and associated care plans.

Safe Talk has also been introduced to Senior Officer Development training. This is similar to ASIST and focuses on how to identify concerns and how to formulate conversations in regards to Self-Harm and Suicide.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice what is the maximum number of Supporting Prisoners at Risk prisoners at Maghaberry allowed in a (i) landing; or (ii) house at any one time; and to detail how the current staff compliment is able to carry out observational checks and produce the required update reports.

(AQW 54777/11-16)

Mr Ford: There is no limit to the number of prisoners, who are subject to Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR), being held in any location within Maghaberry Prison.

SPARs are based on an individual risk. Depending on risk prisoners will be subject to 120 minute observations, 60 minute observations, 30 minute observations or 15 minute observations. Prisoners who are placed on a SPAR document are generally managed within their existing residential unit, and will only be moved from their residential unit to an Observation Cell if it is believed they have an active suicide plan.

All staffing levels within any Residential Unit have been agreed with staff unions as part of the Work Area Risk Assessments and the Regime Delivery Quotas.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice what is the required number of prison officer night staff at Maghaberry for Supporting Prisoners at Risk on each (i) landing; and (ii) house.

(AQW 54778/11-16)

Mr Ford: All residential units have been subjected to Work Area Risk Assessments and Regime Delivery Quotas. Both of these assessments determine the number of staff detailed to each area through the night state. There is no specific allocated staff who are detailed solely for the management of prisoners who are subject to a Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR). Staff detailed through the night state are required to manage these prisoners as part of their normal duties.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions secured for (i) being armed with an offensive weapon with intent to commit an offence; (ii) possessing an article with a blade or point in a public place; and (iii) possessing an article with a blade or point on school premises, in each of the last three years; and whether he has any plans to further legislate on knife crime or the sale of knives.

(AQW 54795/11-16)

Mr Ford: Offences relating to possession of an offensive weapon are prosecuted under Article 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824. Offences relating to possession of an article with a blade or point in a public place or on school premises are prosecuted under Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The table provided gives the number of convictions for these offences for the calendar years 2012 to 2014, the latest year for which data are available.

Convictions for offences specified at courts in Northern Ireland, 2012 – 2014

Offence	2012	2013	2014
Armed with offensive weapon with intent	17	0	0
Possessing an article with a blade or point in a public place	125	144	136
Possessing an article with a blade or point on school premises	< 3	0	0

Note:

3 Figures relate to initial court disposals only. Results of cases brought to appeal are not included.

4 Figures relate to conviction for the offences in question, whether or not they were the primary offence at conviction.

While Legislation is in place to control the purchase and possession of knives in public places, it is also important to encourage responsible usage and greater awareness of the danger of knives.

I have no current plans to further legislate on knife crime or the sale of knives, although my Department will keep the matter under review.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the law on the use of air rifles.

(AQW 54796/11-16)

Mr Ford: The law on the use of firearms, including air guns and shotguns, is contained in the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. A Firearm Certificate is required for an airgun with a kinetic energy in excess of 1 Joule. Articles 5-7 set out the grant process, conditions and grant of a certificate relating to 16 and 17 year olds.

Schedule 1 to the 2004 Order sets out certain exemptions from requiring a firearm certificate. Paragraphs 8 and 9 include exemptions relating to air guns and paragraph 11 sets out exemptions relating to shotguns.

Amendments to the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 are currently before the Assembly in the Justice No. 2 Bill which also impact on access to air guns and shotguns.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to address the number of burglaries in North Down.

(AQW 54802/11-16)

Mr Ford: Although the number of burglaries has declined in recent years, the most recent figures for January 2016 continue to show an increase in comparison to the previous 12 months. In response, I and my Department supported the launch of a joint PSNI / PCSP domestic burglary campaign in Autumn 2015 and I fully support the PSNI anti-burglary operation currently underway focussing on both domestic and non-domestic burglary.

I understand that this operation will involve a range of actions that include vehicle check points, searches of premises, cash sniffer dogs and the provision of advice and information to householders and businesses. Whilst used largely in operations against organised crime, cash sniffer dogs are specially trained to detect large amounts of cash that may be concealed either on the person, in vehicles or in buildings and the PSNI plan to use them in the ongoing operation against burglary.

I am also aware that burglary remains a local policing priority in the Ards and North Down area, and my Department, through the local PCSP, has and will continue to support the PSNI's ongoing operational response to the recent increase, particularly of domestic burglary.

By way of illustration, in partnership with the PSNI and other stakeholders, the local PCSP continues to explore how victims of this crime can be further supported and has undertaken a number of awareness raising events providing advice on the range of measures that can be taken by members of the public to protect their homes and businesses.

Moreover, the PCSP also proactively supports the Nominated Neighbour and Quick Check schemes as well as promoting "Cocoon Watch" delivered through Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

My Department will continue to support both local and regional initiatives to combat the recent increase in this type of crime which has historically been on a downward trend.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice what progress has been made in changing the ways to deal with people prosecuted for failing to pay their television licence fees.

(AQW 54812/11-16)

Mr Ford: Penalties for TV licence evasion are not devolved and are a matter for the UK Government. I have previously stated that I favour the decriminalisation of TV licence evasion and have made my views clear to the UK Government.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport is considering recommendations by an independent Review led by David Perry QC to examine the sanctions in place for failure to have a TV licence. The UK Government has stated that it will consider the findings of the Perry Review, including the potential decriminalisation of TV licence evasion, as part of the review of the BBC's Royal Charter.

On fine default generally, the Justice (No.2) Bill, which will complete its Assembly passage shortly, will transform existing fine collection and enforcement arrangements to provide additional ways for offenders to pay financial penalties and avoid defaulting on their fine.

It will also provide increased opportunities for the use of community based disposals instead of custody where default continues to exist. This will significantly reduce the number of persons committed to prison for the non-payment of any fine.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to outline any discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland following the recent gang related attacks in Dublin.

(AQW 54821/11-16)

Mr Ford: I have regular contact with my counterpart in the Republic of Ireland on a range of issues. The two police services are also in close contact.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the law on the use of shot guns.

(AQW 54829/11-16)

Mr Ford: The law on the use of firearms, including air guns and shotguns, is contained in the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. A Firearm Certificate is required for an airgun with a kinetic energy in excess of 1 Joule. Articles 5-7 set out the grant process, conditions and grant of a certificate relating to 16 and 17 year olds.

Schedule 1 to the 2004 Order sets out certain exemptions from requiring a firearm certificate. Paragraphs 8 and 9 include exemptions relating to air guns and paragraph 11 sets out exemptions relating to shotguns.

Amendments to the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 are currently before the Assembly in the Justice No. 2 Bill which also impact on access to air guns and shotguns.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders were issued in North Down in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 54850/11-16)

Mr Ford: The number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders issued to defendants from the North Down constituency during the period 2007 to 2015 is outlined below.

Year	Number of ASBOs issued
2007	1
2008	1
2009	1
2010	1
2011	0
2012	1
2013	0
2014	0
2015 ^P	0

Source: Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

^P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change.

The provision of data on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders issued in 2006 would require a manual trawl of court records, an exercise that would incur a disproportionate cost.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any plans to increase sentences for sex crimes.
(AQW 54854/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 reviewed and consolidated sexual offences law in Northern Ireland, for the first time, into one statute; strengthened the law on sexual offences and penalties; and provided better protection, particularly for children and other vulnerable groups, from sexual abuse and exploitation.

The appropriateness of this sentencing framework for sexual offences is kept under regular review. I have no current plans for change.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 54179/11-16, how many of the 10 responses which were either supportive or neutral on courthouse closures did in fact express support for the closures.
(AQW 54905/11-16)

Mr Ford: Of the 10 responses which were considered either supportive or neutral on the basis of the comments received, three were considered fully supportive and one was considered supportive of some but not all of the proposals.

Of the remaining six responses that were considered neutral these generally accepted the reasons for the proposals and recognised that there would be some impact but considered that steps could be taken to mitigate this impact.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Justice how many people are currently in receipt of Injury on Duty pensions.
(AQW 54929/11-16)

Mr Ford: The information requested is not held by my Department. The Northern Ireland Policing Board is the administrator of the Injury on Duty scheme. Therefore, you may wish to direct your question to the Board.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Justice how many Injury on Duty Pensions have been (i) increased; (ii) reduced; and (iii) remained unchanged, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 54930/11-16)

Mr Ford: The information requested is not held by my Department. The Northern Ireland Policing Board is the administrator of the Injury on Duty scheme. Therefore, you may wish to direct your question to the Board.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice, other than the Prison Service, which other body, with staff in receipt of a risk allowance, does not pay those staff an overtime rate.
(AQW 54981/11-16)

Mr Ford: The only other DOJ associated body in receipt of such an allowance is the PSNI which pays all officers up to and including Chief Constable the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance. It is paid in recognition of the circumstances under which they serve in Northern Ireland. Overtime is payable to Constables and Sergeants.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice why Custody Prison Officers do not receive an overtime allowance.
(AQW 54982/11-16)

Mr Ford: The terms and conditions of employment of Custody Prisoner Officers in the Northern Ireland Prison Service provide for payment for actual hours worked outside the requirement of the shift cycle rather than through a generic allowance.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice what has been the change in the cost to the public purse of a prisoner place in each year between 2010 and 2015.

(AQW 54985/11-16)

Mr Ford: The change in the cost per prisoner place between 2010 and 2015 is set out in the table below:

Financial Year	Cost per Prisoner Place
2010/11	£73,762
2011/12	£71,398
2012/13	£66,494
2013/14	£62,898
2014/15	£58,387

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been (i) prosecuted; and (ii) convicted in the last two years for their involvement in organising, or participation in, cock fighting.

(AQW 54986/11-16)

Mr Ford: Animal cruelty offences span a number of statutes, including the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Offence descriptions specific to cock fighting are only recorded under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and there were no prosecutions or convictions in relation to the offences specified in 2013 or 2014, the most recent year for which information is available. Offence descriptions under more recent animal welfare legislation are more generic and do not specify the nature of the animal involved where an animal fight has taken place.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice, when dealing with the legacy of the past, what emphasis will be placed on pressing those who participated in, and had knowledge of, terror related activities.

(AQW 54988/11-16)

Mr Ford: The conduct of legacy investigations is an operational matter for the Chief Constable and it is for him to determine how best to conduct individual enquiries. I have, on many occasions, called for all of those with information on criminal activities to contact the PSNI.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) male; (ii) female; and (iii) juvenile prison population for each of the last fifteen years.

(AQW 55051/11-16)

Mr Ford: The information in the table below details the male, female, and juvenile average prison population from 2001 to 2015.

Year	Male	Female	Juvenile*
2001	894	16	20
2002	1,002	24	24
2003	1,138	22	30
2004	1,246	27	31
2005	1,269	32	31
2006	1,393	41	22
2007	1,422	44	16
2008	1,443	46	17
2009	1,420	49	17
2010	1,421	43	15

Year	Male	Female	Juvenile*
2011	1,632	50	13
2012	1,720	56	3
2013	1,765	61	0
2014	1,763	67	0
2015	1,607	57	0

* In line with the recommendation set out in the Youth Justice Review, from November 2012 under 18s have been detained at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55070/11-16)

Mr Ford: Since the Department of Justice was established in April 2010 it has received £800,240 in unmatched European funding:

- £737,000 was received by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to fund a Challenge Hate Crime project, led by NIACRO. This funding was received from the PEACE III Programme. Due to the nature of this project, it is impossible to provide a geographical breakdown of spend; and
- £63,240 was received by Forensic Science Northern Ireland to fund their participation in the Framework Programme 7 project ROSFEN. The majority of this funding was spent at the Forensic Science Northern Ireland laboratories in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

No matched funding was received.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) matched; and (ii) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and where the funding was spent.

(AQW 55147/11-16)

Mr Ford: Since the Department of Justice was established in April 2010 it has received £800,240 in unmatched European funding:

- £737,000 was received by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to fund a Challenge Hate Crime project, led by NIACRO. This funding was received from the PEACE III Programme. Due to the nature of this project, it is impossible to provide a geographical breakdown of spend; and
- £63,240 was received by Forensic Science Northern Ireland to fund their participation in the Framework Programme 7 project ROSFEN. The majority of this funding was spent at the Forensic Science Northern Ireland laboratories in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

No matched funding was received.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Patterson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A4 Southern Enniskillen Bypass.

(AQW 54499/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): The preferred alignment for the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass was announced in June 2015.

You may be aware of my announcement last week setting out my Departments intention to proceed to the next stage of the project and to progress to the production of the Environmental Statement and the draft Statutory Orders (Direction Order and Vesting Order).

My officials are seeking to engage consultants to assist TransportNI taking this stage of the project forward.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on traffic calming measures scheduled in Blackskull.
(AQW 54504/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I can advise that Blackskull has been assessed but due to competing priorities it is not included in the Local Transport and Safety Measures (LTSM) programme at this time.

TransportNI's annual report is normally presented to local councils in the spring. The report is specific to each council area and will outline the LTSM programme for the new financial year as well as detailing works undertaken in the previous year.

TransportNI officials will retain your request for consideration on future works programmes.

The annual report to each local council is also published online and can be viewed at:
www.drdni.gov.uk/publications/type/corporatereports

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the traffic calming measures planned for North Down for 2016-17.

(AQW 54571/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department plans to introduce Traffic Calming Measures along Park Drive, Bangor, during the 2016/17 financial year subject to the availability of finances and satisfactorily completing the necessary legislative requirements and consultation processes.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the advertising or signage that is planned for the Applegreen service station on the M1; (ii) the financial cost of installing, connecting, maintaining this signage including recurrent electricity costs; (iii) who will be liable for this installation; (iv) how signs of this nature meet the policies on roads signage; (v) whether it will be a standard sign or will include additional information, such as fuel costs; and (vi) whether there is equality of treatment for all retailers and forecourts on accessing signage of this nature.

(AQW 54572/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen:

- (i) I can confirm the necessary traffic signage will be provided on the M1 Motorway Westbound for the Applegreen Service Station to allow road users to safely enter and exit the service area on what is a high speed road. The traffic signs provided will include 1 mile and ½ mile advance direction signs, final direction sign at the off slip and 3-2-1 count down signs along with some other necessary traffic signs. Advertising signs may be provided within the service area itself and these are currently subject to a planning application.
- (ii) Full costs are the responsibility of Applegreen.
- (iii) During erection of the traffic signs the contractor undertaking the work for the Motorway Service Area Operator is liable for the installation. On completion of the works, the traffic signs as part of the overall network of roads infrastructure become the property of my Department.
- (iv) The traffic signs when provided will fully comply with my Departments policy on the signing of service areas (link below) and largely replicates the approach taken in the rest of the United Kingdom, and complements that taken in the Irish Republic. The aim of the policy is to ensure a consistency of approach for those who make longer, more strategic journeys on the motorway network in the British Isles
- (v) The traffic signs used will be similar to those used on the M2 Motorway and will include electronic fuel price display panels for unleaded petrol and diesel.
- (vi) My Departments policy on the provision of traffic signing to dedicated roadside service areas on Key Transport Corridors ensures that all operators providing such facilities on Key Transport Corridors are treated the same.

<https://www.drdni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/the-signing-of-service-areas-and-local-facilities-in-by-passed-communities-rsppg-e064.pdf>

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline Translink's policy on helping people who are visually impaired to use public transport.

(AQW 54581/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Translink is committed to making continual improvements to services to meet the needs of people with disabilities. All staff are trained in dealing with those with disabilities including visual impairment.

Translink's website facilitates the use of a suite of products called "BrowseAloud" which makes its websites accessible to those who have print disabilities such as dyslexia or mild visual impairments. For those who prefer a printed timetable, copies in large print, Braille or audio versions can be provided, on request.

Working with Translink, my Department has recently completed the installation of an Audio Visual (AV) system on the Metro bus network in Belfast. The AV system provides passengers with audio and visual information about the next stop on their journey. Feedback to date from a diverse range of passengers, including people with visual impairments, has been very positive.

As part of the project, a pilot to trial an App-based solution for audio visual real time information at all Metro bus stops is also taking place.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development for her assessment of the potential effects on Warrenpoint Harbour of the proposed commercial car ferry service between Greencastle and Greenore.

(AQW 54584/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, and the Carlingford Lough Commissioners (CLC) in whose area the proposed ferry will operate, are aware of this proposal. Both organisations have been consulted as part of the planning process and have been involved in direct communications with the proposed operators.

While the ferry would be obliged to cross the main shipping channel that facilitates vessels to and from Warrenpoint Harbour, it is not anticipated that the proposed Greencastle to Greenore service will unduly impact on the operation, activities and core business of the harbour.

CLC has, as the conservancy body responsible for that part of the Lough, stipulated that all ferry movements must be reported to Port Control at Warrenpoint Harbour. Ferry operators must abide

by all maritime laws and in particular the "The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (Colregs)".

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the (a) north-south; and (b) south-north traffic flow on the (1) A7 Downpatrick to Carryduff; (2) A22 Downpatrick to Comber; (3) A21 Comber to Newtownards; and (4) A20 Portaferry to Millisle roads in each of the last five years; and (ii) the (a) east-west; and (b) west-east traffic flow on the A48 Newtownards to Donaghdee road in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54595/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The attached table details the available traffic flow information for the last five years in the areas requested.

Route	Approximate Location	Year	Direction North-South	Direction South-North
A7	Belfast Rd, Downpatrick at Quoile	2015*	5670	5870
		2014	5740	5880
		2013	5830	6010
		2012	5630	5780
		2011	5530	5680
	Saintfield Road North of Crossgar	2015*	4960	5050
		2014	4860	4930
		2013	4890	5020
		2012	4860	4970
		2011	4910	4990
A22	Killyleagh Road near Ballydrain Road	2015*	4730	4700
		2014	4530	4560
		2013	4100	4140
		2012	4340	4390
		2011	4350	4410
A21	Newtownards Road near Ringcreevy Road	2015*	9260	9040
		2014	9260	9050
		2013	-	-
		2012	-	-
		2011	-	-
A20	North of Kircubbin	2015*	3680	3490
		2014	3760	3520
		2013	-	-
		2012	3580	3360
		2011	-	-
A48	Donaghadee Road, Newtownards near Movilla Road	2015*	5630	4920
		2014	5570	4890
		2013	5330	4790
		2012	5410	4690
		2011	5480	4730

* Draft figures (not yet published)

- Data not available

All flows are annual average daily traffic (7 day flows)

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions her Department is taking to provide people with visual impairments greater access to public transport.

(AQW 54659/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has recently completed the installation of an Audio Visual (AV) system on Translink's Metro bus network in Belfast. The AV system provides passengers with audio and visual information about the next stop on their journey. Feedback to date from a diverse range of passengers, including people with visual impairments, has been very positive. As part of the project, a trial of an App-based solution for audio visual real time information at all Metro bus stops is also taking place.

In addition, Northern Ireland Railway provide audio and visual information on trains and at rail stations, while at rail halts there are automated audio announcements about approaching trains.

Translink is committed to making continual improvements to services to meet the needs of people with disabilities. All staff are trained in dealing with people with disabilities, including those with visual impairment. Translink uses a suite of products called 'BrowseAloud' which makes its websites accessible to those who have print disabilities such as dyslexia or mild visual impairments. For those individuals who prefer a printed timetable, large print, Braille or audio, these versions can be provided, on request.

My Department also supports two bespoke specialist transport schemes which offer transport options to people with disabilities, including those with visual impairments. These schemes are the Dial-A Lift (DAL) service provided by Rural Community Transport Partnerships in rural areas and the Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) which is operated by Disability Action and provides services in 29 urban towns/cities across Northern Ireland.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many traffic lights are operational (i) Belfast; (ii) Lisburn; (iii) Newtownards; (iv) Bangor; (v) Antrim; (vi) Newtownabbey; (vii) Carrickfergus; (viii) Larne; (ix) Ballymena; (x) Ballymoney; (xi) Lurgan; (xii) Portadown; (xiii) Banbridge; (xiv) Newry; (xv) Londonderry; (xvi) Coleraine; (xvii) Armagh; (xviii) Enniskillen; (xix) Omagh; (xx) Cookstown; (xxi) Dungannon; and (xxii) Northern Ireland.

(AQW 54675/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The number of operational traffic lights in each of the areas requested are provided in the table attached. The number of traffic lights at (xxii) Northern Ireland is not the sum of the towns listed above as there are other areas that contain traffic lights which are not referred to in the question.

Location	Number of Operational Traffic Lights
(i) Belfast	428
(ii) Lisburn	44
(iii) Newtownards	26
(iv) Bangor	35
(v) Antrim	10
(vi) Newtownabbey	44
(vii) Carrickfergus	16
(viii) Larne	10
(ix) Ballymena	15
(x) Ballymoney	3
(xi) Lurgan;	23
(xii) Portadown	40
(xiii) Banbridge	14
(xiv) Newry	23
(xv) Londonderry	61
(xvi) Coleraine	22
(xvii) Armagh	17
(xviii) Enniskillen	20
(xix) Omagh	20

Location	Number of Operational Traffic Lights
(xx) Cookstown	10
(xxi) Dungannon	19
(xxii) Northern Ireland	1055

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any work conducted by her Department around a new walking strategy, and any discussions that have taken place to date between her Department and other Departments on the need for a collaborative approach to promoting a walking culture.

(AQW 54770/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has already developed strategies for walking and cycling. For example, a high level strategy for walking is an integral part of my Department's Active Travel Strategy 'Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland' (January 2013). This strategy aims to put walking and cycling at the heart of our local transport arrangements, encouraging a healthier, less stressful, lower cost alternative to the private car for many shorter daily journeys. Given the considerably lower number of cycling journeys, my Department also developed a specific Bicycle Strategy which was published in August 2015.

In terms of promoting an active travel culture my Department funded four Active Travel Demonstration projects and was a key partner in developing the Belfast Active Travel Action Plan. My Department has, for the past three years, worked with the Public Health Agency to deliver the Active School Travel programme and is currently developing a further programme in consultation with the Public Health Agency, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Education. I am currently taking forward work to develop a Strategic Plan for Greenways in order to promote the development of greenways more widely across Northern Ireland.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her Department will improve the cosmetic appearance of Finaghy Bridge.

(AQW 54775/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: While the safety of road users and rail passengers has been greatly improved by the work which was carried out, I realise that the cosmetic appearance of Finaghy Bridge remains a topical issue for local residents.

I recently met with elected representatives from the Finaghy area to discuss this issue. While it was agreed that my Department is not best placed to take the lead in this matter, my officials will work with the other stakeholders to investigate what can be delivered without compromising the integrity of the parapets.

Notwithstanding the above, as you will be aware my Department is operating under very tight financial constraints and appropriate funding will need to be identified before any improvements can be implemented.

Mr Irwin asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the investigation into fuel unsuitable for road use being found in the Transport NI Armagh depot, has been concluded.

(AQW 54825/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The investigation into fuel potentially unsuitable for road use detected in the TransportNI Depot in Armagh has been concluded. HMRC test results confirmed the presence of a low level trace of the rebated fuel marker, Euromarker.

HMRC concluded that the contamination probably occurred during the delivery process, the likely cause being the delivery of white diesel following a delivery of red and that the delivery hose contained residual traces of red diesel. HMRC seized the fuel and also confirmed that they would not take any further action.

The supplier has credited TransportNI for the full cost of the seized fuel and has confirmed that future fuel deliveries will be in accordance with the contractual specification.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the safety review of the A26 Lisnevenagh Road has been concluded; and if so, to outline the recommendations.

(AQW 55062/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I can report that the safety review of the A26 Lisnevenagh Road is now complete and has made a number of recommendations. I am aware that there is great interest in this matter from a number local of MLAs and I intend to have meetings with local representatives at which I can confirm the proposed measures.

Department for Social Development

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54608/11-16)

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): The Department has provided match funding to facilitate drawdown from three European programmes in South Belfast during this period. Information is not available at the level of detail requested in all instances.

During the financial period 05/06-08/09, £3.1m was spent under the element of the PEACE II Programme for which the Department was responsible for. Eighty one projects located in the South Belfast constituency benefitted.

Between 2009/10 and 2015/16 the Department provided the match funding element (35%) totalling over £1m to a number of European Social Fund projects in South Belfast (total project spend £2.9m). Details of the match spend by year is provided in the table below:

Project Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Gems Northern Ireland Limited	£31,452	£55,377	£36,485	£43,949	£64,626	£66,532	£66,532
Greater Village Reg. Trust	-	-	-	-	£129,249	£130,403	£130,403
Greater Village Reg.Trust	£29,214	£ 32,160	£ 34,444	-	-	-	-
Windsor Women's Centre	£49,706	£55,900	£54,809	-	-	-	-

The Department through its arms length body the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in Belfast, has also provided match funding (50%) between 2012/13 and 2014/15 to enable European Regional Development Funds totalling £3.2m to be used to implement the Boiler Replacement Scheme. A further £185,000 has been spent on Peace Initiative projects. Information is not available below the Belfast level.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development for the latest estimate on the current levels of tenancy fraud in (a) annual cash terms; and (b) the number of homes fraudulently occupied.

(AQW 54618/11-16)

Lord Morrow: As a result of the NIAO Report on Tackling Tenancy Fraud in Northern Ireland which was published on 24 September 2013, an exercise was carried out between March 2015 and June 2015 to establish a base line figure for the level of Tenancy Fraud. Both the Housing Executive and Housing Associations were involved in this exercise.

The results of the exercise in the Housing Executive resulted in a baseline tenancy fraud level of between 0.12% and 1.08% at the 95% confidence level. The mid -point of this range (0.6%) would equate to approximately 530 homes. One methodology (used by the NIAO) to estimate the cost of tenancy fraud is based on the cost of a homeless applicant in temporary accommodation (£8,000). The cost of this would therefore equate to £4.2m.

For Housing Associations the exercise was completed in respect of the two largest Housing Associations and the results estimate that there is an indicative baseline of tenancy fraud between 0% and 2.66% at the 95% confidence level. However it is not possible to extrapolate these figures to the total Housing Association properties due to the limited sample. A complete new base lining exercise which encompasses all the Housing Associations is planned to take place over the next few months.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications to the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme have been (i) received; and (ii) accepted, in North Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54655/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below, provided by the Housing Executive, details the number of applications to the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme that have been (i) received; and (ii) accepted, for the NIHE's Bangor District in each of the last five years.

	Applications Received	Applications Accepted
2010/11	4	2
2011/12	1	1
2012/13	2	1
2013/14	0	0
2014/15	0	0

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether employees of Neighbourhood Renewal funded projects in East Londonderry are currently on protective notice pending his Department's decision on funding for 2016-2017.

(AQW 54713/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I have been advised that employees of Neighbourhood Renewal funded projects in East Londonderry have been placed on protective notice, pending my Department's decision on funding support for 2016-17. It should be noted that the funded organisation is the employer and as such assumes all statutory employment responsibilities for its employees, including the decision to place staff on protective notice.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Northern Ireland Housing Executive homes were sold to tenants in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 54718/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that the number of NIHE homes sold to tenants in each of the last three financial years was as follows:-

- 2012/13 - 290
- 2013/14 - 549
- 2014/15 - 471

Mr Lyttle asked inister for Social Development for an update on the Social Housing Reform Programme.

(AQW 54723/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Since January 2013, the Social Housing Reform Programme has been developing new operating policies and proposals for new structural models for social housing delivery.

The policies element of the programme has progressed significantly and a Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan were published on 28 January 2016 following public consultation. Public consultation has also been completed on a new approach to regulation and it is planned to publish a new regulatory framework as soon as possible.

The launch of a public consultation on a new social housing rent policy has been delayed following the policy decision to cut social rents in England emanating from the Chancellor's summer and autumn statements. The Department continues to consider the way forward on this matter.

A Fresh Start included a renewed commitment to social housing structural reform but with a new emphasis on reducing the Departmental Expenditure Limit subsidy pressures. This has required the programme to look again at its work on new structural models and this work is underway. Any significant structural reform will obviously be a matter for the NI Executive.

Mr Douglas asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the implications of extending the Warm Home Discount Scheme to Northern Ireland.

(AQW 54725/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Great Britain (GB) Warm Home Discount Scheme is aimed at helping low income households with energy costs. Participating energy suppliers give a rebate on their electricity bill to a specified group of customers on low incomes. Information is shared between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the energy suppliers which inform them which households to support through the scheme.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme cannot be extended to include Northern Ireland consumers as it was designed for, and underpinned by legislation specific to GB and paid for by GB consumers. Differences in scale and size of the markets mean that extension of the GB scheme or development of a similar scheme in Northern Ireland would lead to disproportionately high consumer bills for many consumers.

Responsibility for any similar scheme in Northern Ireland would primarily be the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how much is planned to be spent on maintenance programmes for Housing Executive homes in (i) Larne; (ii) Islandmagee; (iii) Ballycarry; (iv) Greenisland; (iv) Whitehead; (v) Carrickfergus; (vi) Carnlough; and (vii) Glenarm in each of the next three years.

(AQW 54741/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following details of its anticipated spend on planned maintenance schemes in the Larne and Carrickfergus Districts, that are currently due to commence in the 2016/17 financial year.

The Housing Executive has added that its 2016/17 schemes are indicative and subject to funding confirmation. Furthermore it has not been possible to include details for any further years as it is currently finalising its Investment Plan based on the principles of its new Asset Management Strategy. Maintenance expenditure plans for these years will not be available until this is completed. More detailed information on the actual schemes included can be provided should you wish.

Estimated spend (£) on planned maintenance schemes in 2016/17

Larne District including Islandmagee, Ballycarry, Carnlough and Glenarm	1,418,198
Carrickfergus District including Greenisland and Whitehead	2,382,355
Overall Total	3,800,553

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how much money has been spent on maintenance programmes for Housing Executive homes in (i) Larne; (ii) Islandmagee; (iii) Ballycarry; (iv) Greenisland; (iv) Whitehead; (v) Carrickfergus; (vi) Carnlough; and (vii) Glenarm in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54742/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following summary of its spend on planned maintenance programmes in homes within Larne and Carrickfergus Districts, for each of the last three years. More detailed information on the actual schemes included can be provided should you wish.

Larne District (Includes Islandmagee, Ballycarry, Carnlough and Glenarm) Total Spend (£)

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	
Expenditure (£)	1,383,965	1,119,735	83,759	2,587,459
Forecast Expenditure to Complete 2015/16 (£)			456,486	456,486
				3,043,945

Carrickfergus District (Includes Greenisland and Whitehead) Total Spend (£)

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	
Expenditure (£)	1,341,207	1,476,002	1,176,004	3,993,213
Forecast Expenditure to Complete 2015/16 (£)			227,193	227,193
				4,220,406

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the progress of insulation schemes in South Down.

(AQW 54751/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that an insulation scheme is currently programmed to commence early in 2016/17 in South Down. The scheme in Newry involves the thermal upgrading of 5 adjacent dwellings.

The scheme is a pilot that will provide information to the Housing Executive on the most cost effective strategy to meet the Government's targets for reduction in CO2 emissions, whilst also seeking to address fuel poverty and help improve the thermal comfort of tenants.

The Housing Executive are adopting five different approaches to the homes in the scheme which will include measures such as external wall insulation, upgrading of windows and doors, combined with particular attention to air tightness to avoid draughts and potential heat loss paths.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 54188/11-16, to detail those projects that received both (i) Neighbourhood Renewal funding for salaries and running costs associated with the provision of childcare, and (ii) Early Years funding from the Minister of Education, in 2015-16.

(AQW 54792/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below details those projects that received both Neighbourhood Renewal funding for salaries and running costs to facilitate the provision of childcare, and Early Years funding from Department of Education in 2015-16.

Creggan Pre-School Training Trust	Londonderry
Ionad Uibh Eachach – Development and Regeneration	Belfast
174 Trust – Childcare	Belfast
Ashton Community Trust – Kinder Kids Daycare	Belfast
Glenbank Community Association – Childcare	Belfast
Hobby Horse Playgroup – Childcare	Belfast
Wishing Well Family Centre – Childcare	Belfast
An Droichead Limited – An Droichead Early Years	Belfast
Greater Village Regeneration Trust – South West Belfast – Children's Programme	Belfast
Newtownards Road Women's Group Limited – Carew II Family and Training Centre Childcare Services	Belfast
Tullycarnet Primary School – Enhanced Nurture Group	Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how much his Department has spent on advice relating to pensions and pension benefits in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 54801/11-16)

Lord Morrow: It is not possible to supply definitive figures on the amount spent on any type of specific benefit advice given, as this forms part of the daily activity of all staff working within the Social Security Agency.

As part of day to day support provided to State Pension and State Pension Credit claimants, Social Security Agency staff provide information and advice on a wide range of benefits and support available to them. A Claimant Information Booklet is issued to all State Pension claimants when they are invited to make their claim; this booklet contains details about other benefits and gives a brief background into State Pension Credit.

Staff in the Pension Centre also signpost claimants to several different benefits including Housing Benefit, Carers Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance. The Bereavement Service is also delivered from the Pension Centre and claimants who avail of this service can also be offered a full benefit entitlement check.

In addition to the support provided through the Pension Centre the Department's Benefit Uptake Programme encourages people with potential entitlement to contact either the Social Security Agency's (SSA) Benefits Advice Line, or an independent supplier from the Advice sector, as appropriate, for a Benefit Entitlement Check where they will receive free and confidential advice regarding benefits they are not claiming but may be entitled to.

Whilst not all advice of this kind given by either the Social Security Agency or outsourced partners directly pertains to pension related benefits, the majority of benefit entitlement checks carried out identify potential entitlement to benefits relating to older people. This includes entitlement to State Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance.

The table below sets out the total spend per annum by the Department for Social Development on Benefit Uptake activity commencing from the reporting year of 2005/06, and up to, and including, 2014/15. During this period the Benefit Uptake Programme has generated nearly £100m in additional benefit to almost 30,000 claimants.

The annual amounts include all costs associated with delivering the Department's Benefit Uptake programmes each year, such as staff and administration costs to resource the telephony response units and Community Outreach Service, costs of funding outsourced Advice Sector suppliers who assist in providing advice on potential benefit entitlement, and promotional costs including advertising the 'Make the Call' Benefits Advice Line as appropriate.

Reporting Year	Benefit Uptake: Total Spend per annum
2005 / 06	£221,802
2006 / 07	£314,474
2007 / 08	£565,473
2008 / 09	£581,737
2009 / 10	£731,510
2010 / 11	£472,535
2011 / 12	£1,170,180
2012 / 13	£1,250,856
2013 / 14	£1,396,376
2014 / 15	£1,314,902
Grand Total	£8,019,845

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on proposals to abolish the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and replace it with a regional housing body.

(AQW 54806/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Since January 2013, the Social Housing Reform Programme has been developing new operating policies and proposals for new structural models for social housing delivery. A Fresh Start included a renewed commitment to social housing structural reform but with a new emphasis on reducing the Departmental Expenditure Limit subsidy pressures. This has required the programme to look again at its work on new structural models and consider all options afresh. This work is underway but has not advanced far enough to prefer any options. Any such preferred option will obviously be a matter for the NI Executive.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, following the introduction of the benefit cap and Personal Independence Payments in May 2016, to detail what telephone and online facilities will be available to people wishing to make enquiries.

(AQW 54814/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Benefit Cap will be introduced in Northern Ireland on 31 May 2016. All potentially affected households will receive an early notification letter two months in advance of the change being introduced to advise them that they may be impacted by the cap and where they can obtain further information.

All households identified as exceeding the threshold on 31 May 2016 will receive a telephone call from the Benefit Cap processing team when their case is being referred to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to have the cap applied. This call will advise them what will happen if their housing benefit is reduced and the availability of Welfare Supplementary Payments.

Social Security Agency staff in the local network of Jobs & Benefits/Social Security offices will be given the necessary support and guidance to effectively address any enquiries received and information on the Benefit Cap is also available on the nidirect website.

The current planning assumption is that Personal Independence Payment will be introduced in Northern Ireland on 20 June 2016. Claims to Personal Independence Payment will be made by telephone on a free phone number. In addition there will also be an enquiry line available to make general enquiries about Personal Independence Payment or for claimants to report a change in their circumstances. The nidirect website also hosts a range of information relating to Personal Independence Payment.

In addition, when my Department launches a media campaign in May, to raise awareness of the Welfare Changes, a specialist telephone helpline will be in place to deal with any enquiries that result. This team will be in a position to provide assistance on any of the changes.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of abandoned houses in West Tyrone that could be used for social housing.

(AQW 54822/11-16)

Lord Morrow: As part of ongoing actions within my Department's Empty Home Strategy there have been 37 privately owned properties reported as empty homes to the Housing Executive in West Tyrone.

Of the 37 properties, 6 were occupied or sold with another 6 being blocked up. Of the remaining 25 properties there was;

- 1 in Beragh
- 3 in Castleterragh
- 4 in Fintona
- 1 in Newtownstewart
- 9 in Omagh
- 1 in Plumbridge
- 6 in Strabane

Factors to be considered when trying to return privately owned empty homes back into use is whether there is housing need in the areas where the empty homes are reported. In many instances the location of privately owned empty homes and housing need may not match.

Only 5 of privately owned empty properties are situated in areas of housing need which is in the Strabane area. None of the 5 empty properties reported are former Housing Executive properties. 3 of the properties reported as empty homes are in recently built private developments on the outskirts of town and 2 are in traditional terraced streets.

One of the Department's partners currently assisting in the delivery of the Empty Homes strategy is Clanmil Housing Association. Details of the five properties have been passed to them to ascertain if these properties can be brought back into use.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development to outline his Department's strategy for the regeneration of sites that will become available as a result of schools moving to the Strule Shared Education Campus, Omagh.

(AQW 54844/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My officials have been involved in the development of two key strategies that could contribute to the future development of sites that may become available as a result of schools moving to the Strule Shared Education Campus.

These strategies include the identification of projects in the Omagh Town Centre Masterplan which have recognised that these school sites will be vacated and the development of a Comprehensive Development (CD) brief for the Dublin Road/Kevlin Avenue area of the town. My Department recently widened the scope of its CD brief to take account of the potential impact of vacated schools in this area. Officials are working with consultants to complete a detailed study to guide future development and investment so as to ensure that emerging proposals for the area contribute to a high quality environment, maximise regenerative benefits for Omagh town and compliment the projects identified in the Masterplan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are considered to be homeless and sleeping on the street.

(AQW 54856/11-16)

Lord Morrow: In relation to the Belfast area an audit of those considered to be homeless, and sleeping on the street, was carried out between May and July 2015. At the end of each day during this period, the Street Audit Team recorded the number

of individuals who had been recorded as actually sleeping rough. The average number of rough sleepers per night was 6. Advice and assistance was offered in all cases.

There is currently no data available to gauge the number of individuals who are homeless and sleeping on the street outside of Belfast.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people who availed of the Mobility Scheme in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54863/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The information requested is not available. The Motability Scheme whereby people who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance may exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car is administered by the independent charity Motability. Information on administrative matters relating to the scheme can be obtained from Motability by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5PX.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how much his Department has spent on benefit appeals tribunals, including paying (a) medical professionals; (b) legal professionals; and (c) any other professional present at a tribunal in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 54884/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Appeal Service (TAS) arranges for benefit appeals to be heard at venues throughout Northern Ireland largely based on the postal district within which the appellant resides. TAS does not hold information by constituency in the format requested.

The constitution of an Appeal Tribunal is determined by the benefit type under appeal. The total amount of fees paid to appeal tribunal panel members is detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Legal Member Total Fees	Medical Member Total Fees	Disability Member Total Fees	Financial Member Total Fees
2010/2011	£1,043,204	£748,710	£223,392	£3,322
2011/2012	£1,343,798	£925,534	£240,354	£5,177
2012/2013	£1,484,724	£1,029,276	£227,451	£8,003
2013/2014	£1,796,673	£1,188,745	£237,324	£7,563
2014/2015	£1,563,839	£885,972	£228,917	£4,879

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development for the definition of rough sleepers, as used by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

(AQW 54898/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive follows the guidance used by Department for Social Development and Local Government (DCLG) for the definition of rough sleepers, which is:

- people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments);
- people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites, or other sites used for recreational purposes, or organised protest, squatters or travellers.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the timeframe for allocating funding to advice services in order to provide additional advice on Welfare Reform, in line with the Evason Report.

(AQW 54954/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Welfare Reform Mitigations Working Group Report contains proposals for additional services from the advice sector to support the implementation of Welfare Reform. The report indicates that £8million would be required over 4 years. There is currently no funding allocated. This will be a matter for the NI Executive and will be discussed at the appropriate monitoring round.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 53525/11-16, to explain the basis upon which the expenditure was admissible.

(AQW 54256/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission assesses admissibility of all claims by Members in light of the requirements specified in any Determination issued by the Independent Financial Review Panel and, in particular, paragraphs 9(11) to 9(13) of the current Determination. The Commission also places a number of administrative requirements on Members such as the provision of a signed lease and the requirement for an independent valuation of the rented premises.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 53526/11-16, to explain the basis upon which the £700,000 expenditure was admissible, detailing the bona fide research which was found to have been obtained and by whom.

(AQW 54258/11-16)

Ms Ruane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission is responsible for the administration of the system of financial support for Members and in this role, it establishes procedures and controls to assess the admissibility of claims against the requirements of any Determination formerly issued by the Assembly Commission and, since 2012, by the Independent Financial Review Panel. This system of procedures and controls includes certification of all claims by all Members that any services provided to a Member and the costs subsequently claimed from Office Costs Expenditure, has been delivered. The research material obtained is a matter for each Member.

Mr McNarry asked the Assembly Commission to detail the action it has taken over the last five years to give smaller political parties a role in its deliberations.

(AQW 54281/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): While there may occasionally be issues in front of the Commission which are confidential or sensitive, every Commission Member is always open to hearing the views of any Member of the Assembly. Additionally, the Assembly Commission often considers issues which have been raised by Members through Assembly Questions or correspondence.

The Assembly Commission Handbook allows independent Assembly Members or Members of political parties not represented on the Commission to allocate their vote to an individual Commission Member by prior arrangement with the Speaker. Currently, only one Member of the Assembly has not allocated their vote to a Commission Member.

Under Section 40 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Standing Order 79, it is for the Assembly itself to appoint five Members to represent the entire Assembly as members of the Assembly Commission by a resolution with cross community support. Therefore, in the coming weeks every MLA returned in the May elections will be involved in selecting the Members of the new Commission at the beginning of the next mandate.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 53525/11-16, how its review of the Spotlight programmes confirmed that payments for rent, as reported in the programme, were made for admissible expenditure.

(AQW 54370/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission assesses admissibility of all claims by Members in light of the requirements specified in any Determination issued by the Independent Financial Review Panel and, in particular, paragraphs 9(11) to 9(13) of the current Determination. The Commission also places a number of administrative requirements on Members such as the provision of a signed lease and the requirement for an independent valuation of the rented premises.

The payments for rent, as reported in the Spotlight programme, met the necessary admissibility and administrative requirements.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to detail the checks that were carried out in respect of the claims giving rise to the £700,000 payments to Research Services Ireland.

(AQW 54640/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission assesses admissibility of all claims by Members in the same manner. Claims are assessed against the requirements specified in any Determination issued by the Assembly Commission or, since 2012, by the Independent Financial Review Panel. In addition, any guidance issued by the Commission is taken into account. Every claim submitted by a Member must be accompanied by an original invoice and certified by the Member. Any claims for payment to Research Services Ireland were assessed in the same manner as all other claims and against these criteria.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission what involvement the Northern Ireland Audit Office had in any examination of the process by which £700,000 payments were made to Research Services Ireland.

(AQW 54641/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) undertakes the external audit of the Assembly Commission's Annual Report and Resource Accounts in accordance with auditing standards issued by the Auditing Practice Board taking into account Practice Note 10 (Revised); Audit of Financial statements in Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom.

The risk based approach adopted by the NIAO means that the administration of the framework of financial support for Members is reviewed as part of the annual audit process. The audit involves analytical procedures and sample testing of Members' expenditure.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 18 March 2016

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the paramilitary groups that are involved in continuing paramilitary activity and whose activity will be addressed under A Fresh Start.
(AQW 51293/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): This work will be informed by the document "Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland" an assessment commissioned by the Secretary of State on the structure, role and purpose of paramilitary groups.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when age discrimination legislation will be brought before the Assembly.
(AQW 52848/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: We are currently finalising the analysis of responses to the consultation and these will be taken into account in developing final policy proposals. We will consider the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when assessing the progress made by the Equality Commission in analysing community background representation in the Northern Ireland workforce, whether they will raise the importance of recent recruitment when determining if there is under representation in the workplace.
(AQW 53215/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland publishes an annual 'Fair Employment Monitoring report' which aggregates monitoring information across all monitored employers in Northern Ireland, to produce composition figures (employees, applicants, appointees, promotees, leavers) at the Northern Ireland level and for key sectors. This summary, across all registered employers, provides an understanding of the overall balance in the composition of employment. The most recent Fair Employment Monitoring Report, No 25, was published on 8 December 2015.

The Commission also provides advice to employers to help them comply with the requirements placed on them by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 to register with the Commission, monitor their workforces and provide an annual monitoring return to the Commission. Employers must also, at least every three years, conduct reviews of their employment composition, including recruitment information, and their employment practices to assess whether or not they are providing fair participation in their workforces.

Monitoring information, whether at the level of the Northern Ireland workforce, in particular sectors, locations or for individual employers should be considered in the context of information on local labour availability.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how much it would cost to introduce 30 hours of free childcare per week for each child.
(AQW 53277/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: As the Westminster Childcare Bill, which aims to increase the amount of free, pre-school childcare available to working parents to 30 hours, will not apply here, we have not formally estimated the likely cost of 30 hours free childcare.

Consultation on the draft Executive Childcare Strategy closed in November last year. Officials are currently reviewing the comments received with a view to finalising the draft. The final version will include costed actions to deliver, over the life of the Strategy, an affordable and appropriate childcare place for every child that needs one.

Mr McCrossan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the anti-poverty strategy following concerns raised at the Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in September 2015. (AQW 53328/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: We have noted the concerns raised at the Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the list of issues which they published following the pre-sessional meeting in Geneva on the 14 October 2015 (not on the 15 September 2015 as the question indicates).

We are currently developing a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need. Work to date has focused on looking at the tools for measuring objective need and pre-consultation engagement with key stakeholders. We expect to bring forward further proposals in the coming months.

Mr Allen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of each of the strategic priorities contained within the disability strategy. (AQW 53345/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Since the publication of the Executive's Disability Strategy in February 2013, Government departments have taken forward a number of actions to improve the lives of people with disabilities. These actions are highlighted in the first report on the implementation of the Strategy, which is available on our website at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/disability-strategy-report-2013-2014.pdf>

In May 2015, we extended the lifetime of the Strategy until March 2017 to ensure that focus remains, and to give additional time for priority areas in the strategy to be progressed.

Following a public consultation exercise, we are currently developing a set of indicators to measure progress on the implementation of the Strategy.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the impact that the stop-start nature of funding and frequent gaps between funding programmes is having on the ability of the community and voluntary sector to sustain their work within communities; and to detail what additional support they can offer to this sector. (AQW 53382/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: At the Executive Meeting on 16th April 2015, Junior Ministers were remitted to establish a dialogue with NICVA on an ongoing basis about the role of the voluntary and community sector and the challenges they are facing.

Junior Ministers also gave an undertaking to report back to the Executive on any action that can be taken.

Junior Ministers have met with representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector, Ministerial colleagues and received briefings from officials.

Following extensive engagement with Government Departments and the Voluntary and Community Sector, an Action Plan has been developed.

The intention is to present the proposed actions to the Executive for agreement after which the actions will be shared across departments.

Mr McNarry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail which Department will have responsibility for the Public Records Office following the implementation of the Departments Bill. (AQW 53495/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Public Record Office is currently part of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, which will be dissolved by the Departments Bill when it comes into operation. After the transfer of statutory functions consequent on the Departments Bill, the Public Record Office will become part of the future Department for Communities, as will the majority of DCAL functions.

Mr Allen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the overall development of the Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes. (AQW 53560/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Delivering Social Change is about creating a new culture and focus on cross cutting work to achieve social benefits that deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages. The Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes are part of that programme and their potential social benefits are multi-faceted.

Central Funding of some £27million, for all of the initial six Signature Programmes announced in October 2012, has now been allocated. DSC funding for these projects will end in March 2016.

The Literacy and Numeracy Programme has concluded. The remainder of the Programmes (Nurture Units, Family Support Hubs, Parenting Support, Community Family Support and Social Enterprise Hubs) will continue, after March 2016, by way of alternative funding sourced by the lead departments.

Lead departments are undertaking an outcomes based approach to the evaluation of the success of these six programmes and initial findings have been very positive. More detailed reports on individual projects are anticipated from lead departments in due course.

OFMDFM is currently evaluating the success of the Delivering Social Change Framework by way of an assessment of its overall performance against its stated objectives and the effectiveness of its governance structures.

Additionally, three further Signature Programmes to be jointly funded with Atlantic Philanthropies up to £58m in total, were announced in September 2014. These projects are at various stages of delivery and are progressing well in the areas of the Early Intervention Transformation, Dementia Services and Shared Education. This funding commitment will take the Signature Programmes up to 2017/18 with a particular focus to achieve transformative outcomes for Departments to mainstream long-term and are also subject to an ongoing outcomes based evaluation approach.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on work to establish a compact civic advisory panel as proposed in the Stormont House Agreement.

(AQW 54715/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: We are currently giving consideration to identifying and appointing members to the Compact Civic Advisory Panel. The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan of 17 November 2015 envisaged a Panel of six people being tasked by the Executive to consider specific strategic issues relevant to the Programme for Government. The Panel will report to the Executive, and it may also propose subjects for consideration and seek Executive agreement to do so. It is expected that the panel will seek the views of a wide range of representatives and stakeholders from civic society in recognition of the importance of having civic voices heard, and civic views considered, in relation to key social, cultural and economic issues.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why they have not removed the teachers exception from the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

(AQW 54794/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Although our Department has responsibility for the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the issue clearly impacts on the Department of Education. Therefore, we are currently working with the Department of Education to consider the matter further.

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of families that benefitted from the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme in the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 54880/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Since its launch in 2014, the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme has awarded funding to childcare settings that meet its selection criteria to enable them to create or sustain school age childcare places. The table below shows the number of assisted childcare settings in each constituency along with the relevant number of childcare places sustained or created.

Assisted childcare settings based in a particular constituency need not be used exclusively by families living in that constituency. Similarly, families living in a particular constituency may use assisted childcare services located elsewhere.

A third call for applications to the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme closed on 29 January 2016; all applications received are currently being assessed. The full, final Childcare Strategy is currently being finalised. When launched later this year, we expect it to offer further funding opportunities for current and prospective childcare providers.

Assembly Constituency	Number of Childcare Settings	Childcare Places
North Belfast	4	110
West Belfast	5	131
South Belfast	2	64
East Belfast	3	102
Lagan Valley	2	122
Strangford	4	102
North Down	1	41
South Down	3	70
North Antrim	3	70
East Antrim	1	32
South Antrim	3	89
West Tyrone	9	358

Assembly Constituency	Number of Childcare Settings	Childcare Places
Mid Ulster	5	202
East Londonderry	5	120
Newry & Armagh	4	95
Upper Bann	6	160
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	10	302
Foyle	3	64

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the timescale for processing applications to the Central Good Relations Fund.

(AQW 54893/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The 2015/16 Central Good Relations Fund opened for applications on 18 March 2015 and closed on 20 April 2015. Applications for small grants can be made throughout the year. We have received 183 applications for funding, totalling just over £9m. Funding was released in phases with the first applicants being advised that they were successful in May 2015.

The 2016/17 Central Good Relations Fund opened for applications on 29 February 2016 and will close on 21 March 2016. We anticipate that we will be able to advise successful applicants in April 2016.

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the communications made to applicants that applied to the Central Good Relations Fund.

(AQW 54894/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The 2015/16 Central Good Relations Fund opened for applications on 18 March 2015 and closed on 20 April 2015. Applications for small grants can be made throughout the year. We have received 183 applications for funding, totalling just over £9m. Funding was released in phases with the first applicants being advised that they were successful in May 2015.

Unsuccessful applicants were informed on 24th and 25th February 2016 following the allocation of the final tranche of funding.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the pressures that led to the request for an advance of up to £20m funding from the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

(AQO 9727/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: This cash advance of funds is due to timing issues and is not as a result of pressures. It does not constitute an increase in OFMDFM's budget.

OFMDFM's Spring Supplementary Estimate included an increase in the Department's net cash requirement of £25.7 million. Due to the timing of cash payments, up to £20 million of this cash is required in advance of Royal Assent for the Budget Bill 2016, at which point the advance will be paid.

This transaction is entirely within normal procedures.

This is not an unusual occurrence and other departments have made the same request previously.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the price obtained from MJM Group for the Shackleton site; and how much this represents per acre.

(AQW 54964/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: MJM Group has agreed to pay £1m for approximately 621.5 acres of the Shackleton site. We are keen to ensure that the future development of Shackleton delivers maximum benefits for the people of the North West, particularly in relation to the creation of employment opportunities. Proposals to purchase Shackleton were therefore assessed against four criteria – Job Creation, Financial Offer to Purchase the Site, Environmental Benefits and Community Benefits.

Mr Douglas asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

(AQO 9730/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Inquiry completed oral hearings for module 11 of its schedule on 22 February, dealing with St Joseph's Training School, Middletown.

The next module is due to commence on 7 March and it will deal with Good Shepherd convents that were based in Belfast, Derry/ Londonderry and Newry. It is anticipated that module 12 will last 2 weeks.

Since January the Inquiry has also investigated both Manor House Home, Lisburn and Millisle Borstal.

The targeted consultation on the high level principles of redress, announced by the Inquiry chairperson on 4 November, concluded on 8 January. The responses to the consultation will inform the Inquiry's consideration of this very important topic.

The Inquiry remains within budget and on target to complete its investigations by July 2016. Its recommendations, including its fully formed recommendation with regard to redress, will be made in its report to the Executive in January 2017.

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline why their departmental administration budget has increased by 21.97 per cent since 2012.

(AQO 9732/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Department's administration budget has actually fallen by 1.5% over the period April 2012 to November 2015 when the budget is compared on a like for like basis.

The figures quoted in your question compare an opening April 2012 budget with a late year November 2015 budget. These need to be adjusted to reflect programme spend reclassified as administration spend and also for in year technical transfers from other departments that were not included in opening budget in 2012. When these adjustments are made the Department's administration budget has reduced by 1.5%.

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the Narrow Water Bridge project since A Fresh Start was agreed.

(AQO 9735/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: As part of the outworking of the Fresh Start agreement, a group of senior officials from the NI Executive and Irish Government has been established to maintain a strategic overview of economic and infrastructural investment projects mentioned in Section E of the Fresh Start Agreement and this will include consideration of the Narrow Water Bridge project.

They are to report progress to the North South Ministerial Council by June 2016.

The deputy First Minister met a delegation from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council on 24 February to discuss the project.

Mr Diver asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding their Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55088/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The information held centrally on the financial accounting system does not break EU expenditure down to the level asked in this question.

Mr McCrossan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) matched; and (ii) unmatched European Union funding their Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and where the funding was spent.

(AQW 55142/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The information held centrally on the financial accounting system does not break EU expenditure down to the level asked in this question.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the estimated cost of the extension of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

(AQO 9788/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse was originally expected to report to the Executive in January 2016, with an estimated cost over its lifetime of £15.7million.

However, following the first module of the Inquiry's public hearings, the Inquiry Chairman made a persuasive and compelling case for a one year extension to the Inquiry timeframe, which was approved by resolution of this Assembly.

A Business Case Addendum to extend the Inquiry by one year was agreed in January 2015. The total funding now approved for the Inquiry, including the one year extension, is £17.1million.

The Inquiry remains on schedule and within budget to complete its investigation by 19 July 2016 and to deliver its report in January 2017.

Mr A Maginness asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many of the Programme for Government 2011-15 targets have been achieved.

(AQO 9790/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Of the 82 Commitments in the Programme for Government, 66 have been achieved (80.5%).

This level of performance compares favourably with the previous Programme for Government period when the equivalent figure was 69.5%.

Mr Murphy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Good Relations Fund will open to applications for 2016-17.

(AQO 9793/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Central Good Relation fund opened for applications on 29 February 2016 and will close at 2.00pm on 21 March 2016.

Mr Anderson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of when the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill [HC Bill 133] will receive Royal Assent.

(AQO 9794/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The UK Government is seeking to have this Bill fast-tracked so that, subject to Parliamentary approval, Royal Assent can be obtained before the Assembly elections on 5 May.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the progress of the proposed Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme, including when it is expected to be open for applications.

(AQW 54917/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): On 10 March 2016 I announced an emergency financial aid package which will provide £1,000 to help non-domestic organisations impacted by the recent exceptional flooding.

This one-off programme will assist those responsible for non-domestic properties, including small businesses, farms, recreational and community buildings and places of worship, who have suffered severe inconvenience as a result of the recent flooding.

Further details on the scheme including when it will be open for applications will be available soon.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department has taken to advise home owners in areas at risk of flooding of the potential threat; and whether any advice has been given on the steps these home owners might take.

(AQW 54956/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Rivers Agency has developed an interactive map-viewer 'Flood Maps (NI)' that enables home owners to access the latest flood hazard information available from government. The viewer highlights the areas throughout Northern Ireland that are prone to flooding and its potential adverse impacts, and presents information on predictive flooding from the various flood sources (rivers, sea and surface water) for both present day and climate change epochs. The viewer also contains information on historical flood events.

The Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme was launched in January 2016. This grant scheme is designed to encourage owners of residential properties located within known flood risk areas, to modify their properties to reduce the likelihood of flood water entering the home. Further details can be found on <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/flooding-in-your-area>. This website also contains other useful information regarding flooding such as, reporting of flooding, reducing flood damage, health precautions and other safeguards in relation to electricity and insurance

Rivers Agency has also been taking the lead in working with other key responders to flooding to improve community resilience to flooding in areas where it is not possible to undertake a flood alleviation scheme, or it will be some time before a scheme can be undertaken. This involves helping communities to develop their own emergency plans and the pre-deployment of resource to help reduce flood risk in those local areas.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54979/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development has spent £2.9m of matched and £17.4m of unmatched European Union funding in Foyle within the last 6 years from April 2009 to March 2015.

A table showing where this money was spent is shown over leaf.

Due to the Department's document retention policy of 7 years, financial information for 2008/09 and earlier years is limited and has therefore been excluded.

DARD EU Funding - Foyle Constituency

Programme	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Single Farm Payment	3,221	2,699	2,988	2,690	2,946	2,581	17,125
Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-13 - Axis 1	38	35	29	1	29	26	158
RDP 2007-13 - Axis 2	207	289	336	282	301	275	1,689
RDP 2007-13 - Axis 3	0	39	187	536	223	317	1,302
European Fisheries Fund	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
Total	3,466	3,062	3,540	3,509	3,508	3,199	20,284

Axis 1 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to food and farming and aims to improve competitiveness. It is made up of measures that target farmers and farm families specifically, include benchmarking, focus farms, mentoring and modernisation.

Axis 2 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to the protection and enhancement of natural resources and rural landscapes. It is made up of measures that aim to improve the environment and countryside by promoting environmental services, preserving the farmed landscape, encouraging the development of new and existing forests and woodlands and supporting the growth of organic farming.

Axis 3 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to quality of rural life and the LEADER approach. It supports farm diversification, business creation and development, tourism, conserving rural heritage, basic services for the rural economy, and village renewal.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. **(AQW 55073/11-16)**

Mrs O'Neill: The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development has spent £33.2m of matched and £226.2m of unmatched European Union funding in West Tyrone within the last 6 years from April 2009 to March 2015.

A table showing where this money was spent is shown over leaf.

Due to the Department's document retention policy of 7 years, financial information for 2008/09 and earlier years is limited and has therefore been excluded.

DARD EU Funding - West Tyrone Constituency

Programme	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Single Farm Payment	40,959	36,376	37,362	34,184	38,727	33,856	221,464
Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-13 - Axis 1	421	199	1,158	118	645	365	2,906
RDP 2007-13 - Axis 2	3,627	4,164	5,536	5,070	5,022	5,262	28,681
RDP 2007-13 - Axis 3	0	347	872	895	1,553	1,569	5,236
EU Interreg IVA Programme	0	0	41	145	158	519	863
European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme	0	0	90	109	50	0	249
Total	45,007	41,086	45,059	40,521	46,155	41,571	259,399

Axis 1 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to food and farming and aims to improve competitiveness. It is made up of measures that target farmers and farm families specifically, include benchmarking, focus farms, mentoring and modernisation.

Axis 2 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to the protection and enhancement of natural resources and rural landscapes. It is made up of measures that aim to improve the environment and countryside by promoting environmental services, preserving the farmed landscape, encouraging the development of new and existing forests and woodlands and supporting the growth of organic farming.

Axis 3 of the RDP 2007-13 relates to quality of rural life and the LEADER approach. It supports farm diversification, business creation and development, tourism, conserving rural heritage, basic services for the rural economy, and village renewal.

The EU Interreg IVA Programme focuses on rural tourism and enterprise infrastructure development in rural areas.

The European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme supports the EU regional strategy by promoting investment in research and technological development and encouraging enterprise and entrepreneurship in a sustainable development

context. The spend under this Programme was specifically on the Biomass Processing Challenge Fund which aims to encourage agricultural and forestry businesses to install biomass fuelled technologies primarily to aid agricultural activities at farm level.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact on farm businesses of red meat market price differentials between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

(AQW 55084/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The beef and sheep sectors are extremely important to our agri-food industry and our wider economy.

I have consistently stated that I want to see a strong, profitable red meat sector here and that this will only be achieved if farmers see a fair return for their high quality, traceable produce.

I understand farmer concerns about the difference in the price they receive for their high quality beef and sheep meat, compared to their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales. Very recently, the UFU has indicated that the beef price differential is costing our beef industry as much as £17 million each year.

Many factors affect the price our beef and sheep farmers receive. The 2013 Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) study, which examined the beef price differential, identified transport costs to Britain, cheaper supply available from the south and seasonality of production (usually with an over-supply in the autumn) as the main causes. Other factors influencing the prices include the structure of finishing, adherence to specifications and higher processing costs in the north.

In relation to the sheep price differential it is worth noting that various dressing specifications are utilised by abattoirs throughout Britain, making price comparisons difficult.

I therefore welcome the recent report of the EFRA Parliamentary Committee on Farmgate prices which highlighted the price differential and its call for retailers to justify the reasoning behind the disparity in prices being paid in the north. I have asked my officials to monitor developments on this report carefully.

Obviously my Department does not set beef prices but where we can make a difference, I am keen to take steps. My officials have discussed these matters with representatives of the Ulster Farmers Union in recent weeks and are taking a fresh look at the LMC report.

We are also making progress on a number of important fronts to support a more efficient, sustainable and profitable red meat industry. These include opening access to new markets in Canada, Australia, the US and Philippines and support for knowledge transfer, innovation and cooperation and capital investment through the Farm Business Improvement Scheme.

Furthermore, I will continue to do whatever I can to encourage fairness and transparency in the supply chain. You will be aware I have tasked the Agri-Food Strategy Board with establishing the Supply Chain Forum to examine how to improve the longer term sustainability of the local agri-food supply chain through enhanced communication and collaboration. The Forum, which is due to meet again in early 2016, will play a key role bringing together all elements of the supply chain together to enhance the competitiveness and profitability of the sector.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department is working with retailers to support local farmers and their produce.

(AQW 55085/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: I, and my officials, have met with representatives of local supermarkets on a number of occasions. I continue to emphasise the support of local farmers and their produce and also highlight the need for a fair and equitable distribution of profits along the supply chain. To this end, I asked the Agri-Food Strategy Board to convene a Supply Chain Forum to bring together all stakeholders, including producers, retailers and Government, to work together to address the fragmentation in the supply chain and find a way forward. A second meeting is being planned and I also intend to visit Asda where I will again press for fairer returns and increased sourcing from local farmers and growers.

In 2013, I launched the 'Switch to Local' campaign, spearheaded by Tesco NI and in 2016, my Permanent Secretary launched Tesco's Year of Food & Drink initiative, both aimed at encouraging consumers to choose from the wealth of high quality, innovative food which is produced in the north. My Department is providing support for the Year of Food & Drink through some activities at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) – Loughry Campus and via the Regional Food Programme (RFP). In particular, the RFP will provide funding for a number of initiatives that will seek to promote increased consumption and sourcing of local products. Many of these initiatives will take place in conjunction with retailers, large and small.

My Department, through CAFRE's Loughry Campus, facilitates regular engagement between processors and retailers through a variety of seminars, training programmes and events, underpinning DARD's commitment to making Loughry the Food Hub of the north. As well as informing processors about how to do business with retailers, this enables valuable networking to take place to increase retailers' awareness of local produce. Most of the north's retailers have also visited Loughry's facilities, especially the new Food Innovation Centre, for events such as supplier awareness seminars.

In recent months, I and my officials have met with the NI Retail Consortium (NIRC) and NI Independent Retailer Trade Association (NIIRTA) to discuss issues including milk prices and other supply chain challenges. In addition, I met the NIRC to discuss beef labelling in the context of mixed origin cattle.

I have also written recently to all supermarkets operating in the north about the decline in vegetable prices and to Tesco following the publication in January of the findings of the Grocery Code Adjudicator following their investigation into Tesco's activities.

DARD is committed to spreading the message about the integrity and provenance of our local agri-food, the high quality, flavours and tastes of local produce, and the green and natural countryside where our food is produced.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much of the Common Agriculture Policy Pillar II Rural Development Programme funding is projected to be spent in South Down in the next five years.

(AQW 55102/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The European Commission has approved our proposals for a Rural Development Programme for 2014 to 2020 worth up to £623m.

Under the lifetime of Programme £261m has been allocated to support the competitiveness of our agri-food industry with £245.2m to support schemes to protect our rural environment and £80m to develop our rural economies through locally led rural development. £36.8m has been set aside for technical assistance throughout the programme.

We are rolling out the Programme in a staged, co-ordinated way. The schemes under the programme have not all opened yet. Funding will be based on calls for applications. Applications are expected from all constituencies in the north and funds allocated to those eligible applications who meet the criteria for funding. Funding is allocated by scheme/measure and not on a constituency basis.

Until the schemes are open and applications received it is not possible to determine the value of funding applicants in each constituency will receive. Therefore information you have requested is not available.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much of the Common Agriculture Policy Pillar II Rural Development Programme funding was spent in South Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55103/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development provided a total of £24,129,553 to South down from 2010/11 years to 2014/15. This is broken down in the table at Annex 1, overleaf.

Annex 1 – Rural Development Programme South Down Constituency Funding

Programme / Scheme	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	Total £
Axis 1 NI Rural Development Programme						
Vocational Training	50,762	62,062	37,931	36,834	16,343	203,932
Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG)	0	47,928	17,546	198,458	60,886	324,818
Farm Modernisation Programme (FMP)	35,553	230,538	7,240	359,875	96,562	729,768
Efficiency Technology Scheme (METS) EU	48,000	0	29,900	0	0	77,900
Efficiency Technology Scheme (METS) National	0	69,900	30,000	0	0	99,900
Supply chain Development	0	545	580	3,362	9,192	13,679
Total Axis 1	134,315	410,973	123,197	598,529	182,983	1,449,997
Axis 2 NI Rural Development Programme						
Forest Service Grant Scheme	124,000	152,000	103,000	149,000	176,000	704,000
Agri-environment Scheme Payments	1,461,738	1,190,084	1,222,044	1,256,510	1,573,778	6,704,154
Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance	1,407,000	1,352,000	1,555,000	1,341,000	1,622,000	7,277,000
Total Axis 2	2,992,738	2,694,084	2,880,044	2,746,510	3,371,778	14,685,154

Programme / Scheme	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	Total £
Axis 3 NI Rural Development Programme						
Farm Diversification	0	145,272	287,630	536,617	271,225	1,240,744
Business Creation and Development	109,846	189,062	249,912	156,989	185,846	891,655
Rural Tourism	26,420	882,874	92,085	461,201	572,330	2,034,910
Basic Services	0	97,351	117,018	738,336	1,708,265	2,660,970
Village Renewal	0	0	28,387	106,288	585,063	719,738
Conservation of Rural Heritage	0	15,319	25,345	254,957	150,764	446,385
Total Axis 3	136,266	1,329,878	800,377	2,254,388	3,473,493	7,994,402
Total	3,263,319	4,434,935	3,803,618	5,599,427	7,028,254	24,129,553

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding under the Common Agriculture Policy Pillar I Direct Payments is projected to be paid in South Down in the next five years.

(AQW 55104/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The amount of funding currently projected to be paid under the Common Agriculture Policy Pillar I Direct Payments in the South Down constituency over the next five years is detailed in the table below:

Year	Projected Payment
2016	€26,554,618
2017	€26,643,958
2018	€26,733,297
2019	€26,822,637
2020	€26,911,976

Source of Locally Produced Eggs

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of locally produced eggs originate from (i) free range; (ii) barn; and (iii) caged hens.

(AQW 55106/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The volume of egg production within the north of Ireland is collated via survey work for use in the calculation of total income from farming (TIFF) figures.

The current provisional information for the calendar year 2015 regarding egg production system types is as follows:

- (i) Free Range 43%
- (ii) Barn 8%
- (iii) Caged hens 46%

An additional 3% is represented by Organic production. I hope you find this helpful.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the implications of an EU exit on her Department and the new Department for Communities; and what preparations her Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 55055/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): An exit from the EU may limit funding opportunities for my Department and its arms length bodies in the future. For example, since 2013/14 Arts Council NI has drawn down over £1.2million in Peace 3 monies and an EU exit would mean any application to such funding streams on the part of Arts Council would not be possible.

To date no preparations have been made by DCAL for an EU exit as both the outcome of the referendum and the subsequent terms of an exit are unknown.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what existing regulations cover mixed martial arts; and whether these regulations are recognised by the Sports Council.

(AQW 55061/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that as Mixed Martial Arts is not a recognised sport, any existing regulations are not recognised by Sport NI, any of the UK Sports Councils or Sport Ireland.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the (i) matched; and (ii) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and where the funding was spent.

(AQW 55148/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: AQW 55148/11-16

The information you have asked for is set out in the attached table.

The Department is required only to maintain financial records for the previous 7 years and this constraint is reflected in the information provided in the answer table.

As well as the spend listed in the attached table, the Armagh Observatory collaborated with Libraries NI to display its portable 'From Earth To The Universe' (FETTU) exhibition in the following places within Foyle Constituency:

Location	Date	Estimated Attendees
Shantallow Library	September 2012	5000
Waterside Library	11 - 16 February 2013	2500
Derry Central Library	5 - 9 April 2013	400

As this was part of a larger EU funded project it is not possible to determine how much these individual events cost.

Year	Funder	Name / Nature of Project	Amount of Matched Funding	Amount of Unmatched Funding	Awarded to
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Building Peace through the Arts - Reimaging Communities.	£4,543	£0	Bond Street Community Association
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Building Peace through the Arts - Reimaging Communities.	£4,492	£0	Drumahoe Community Association

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding streams are available to GAA clubs in West Tyrone. **(AQW 55188/11-16)**

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, provides funding to sports, including GAA clubs, through a number of funding programmes to assist in the development of sport.

While all funding has been allocated for this year, GAA clubs in West Tyrone can keep informed of any future funding programmes by registering with Sport NI at: <http://www.sportni.net/funding/funding-guidance/>

Additional potential funding providers can be found on Sport NI's website at: <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/OtherFunding1.pdf>

Clubs can also contact their local councils to see if grant aid is available through a grants programme.

I can advise that my officials are currently working on an Executive bid for funding to roll out a further phase of the Sub Regional Programme to encompass Gaelic, Soccer and Rugby.

I am aware that St Patrick's Gaelic Football Club, Gortin applied to the Single Facility Strand of Sport NI's Capital Sports Facility Fund which closed in July 2015. The programme is aimed specifically at small amateur sports clubs to enable them to apply for capital support to develop and improve premises and facilities. St Patrick's Gaelic Football Club has been invited to progress to the next stage of the application process which includes the preparation of a business case.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what investment her Department has overseen in Newry and Armagh since 2011.

(AQW 55230/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The total funding my Department has invested in the Newry and Armagh constituency since 2011 is £21,325,495. This is detailed in the table below.

Constituency		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Newry and Armagh	Resource	3,744,900	3,448,609	3,755,724	3,322,065	3,112,623
	Capital	1,142,196	668,705	871,666	457,763	801,245

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what progress has been made on determining responsibility for the reconstruction of the West Stand at Windsor park.

(AQW 55305/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The responsibility for the reinstatement of the West Stand at Windsor Park lies with the contractor, O'Hare & McGovern. All costs associated with this element of the project are being covered through their insurance brokers.

The works associated with the reinstatement of the West Stand are progressing well and are scheduled to be completed by September 2016.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much (i) her Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55318/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information you have asked for is set out in the attached table. Information for 2015/16 is not yet available.

	2011-12 £k	2012-13 £k	2013-14 £k	2014-15 £k
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	6	51	7	0
Arts Council NI	33	6	22	64
NI Screen	17	0	0	0
Libraries NI	62	82	0	0
Sport NI	9	10	17	1

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what investment her Department has overseen in South Antrim since 2011.

(AQW 55378/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The total funding my Department has invested in the South Antrim constituency since 2011 is £3,875,245. This is detailed in the table below.

Constituency		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
South Antrim	Resource	629,887	626,766	666,720	714,034	504,384
	Capital	385,071	164,869	33,513	0	150,000

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what investment his Department has overseen in Upper Bann since 2011.

(AQW 55384/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The total funding my Department has invested in the Upper Bann constituency since 2011 is £5,776,492. This is detailed in the table below.

Constituency		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Upper Bann	Resource	1,022,032	755,654	809,809	769,243	631,945
	Capital	582,777	101,763	676,451	353,779	73,039

Department of Education

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Education to detail how much his Department has invested in schools in Foyle between (a) 2007-11; and (b) 2011-16.

(AQW 54401/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): In accordance with the Departmental Retention & Disposal Schedule, documentation prior to 2008-09 is no longer available, therefore I can only provide a complete response to your request from 2008 onwards.

The following table provides details of investment provided by my Department for the Foyle between 2008-11 and 2011-16:

	(a) 2008-11 £'000	(b) 2011-16 £'000
Resource	272,871	471,039
Capital	*27,156	**22,085
Total	300,027	493,124

* Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on a cash basis.

** Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on an accruals basis.

Figures provided for the period 2011-16 include the year to date investment for 2015-16, as this financial year is not yet complete these figures are subject to change.

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail how much his Department has invested in schools and youth services in South Belfast, in each year since 2007.

(AQW 54402/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In accordance with the Departmental Retention & Disposal Schedule, documentation prior to 2008-09 is no longer available, therefore I can only provide a complete response to your request from 2008 onwards.

The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for South Belfast, in each year since 2008:

	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	88,164	90,369	94,123	95,737	97,889	98,952	97,900
Capital	*4,104	*8,469	*4,247	**9,019	**8,618	**8,343	**9,484
Total	92,268	98,838	98,370	104,756	106,507	107,295	107,384

* Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on a cash basis.

** Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on an accruals basis.

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism, the Community Relations Core Funding Scheme and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a geographical basis.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail how much his Department has invested in schools and youth services in East Belfast, in each year since 2007.

(AQW 54459/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In accordance with the Departmental Retention & Disposal Schedule, documentation prior to 2008-09 is no longer available, therefore I can only provide a complete response to your request from 2008 onwards.

The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the East Belfast constituency, in each year since 2008:

	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	56,351	59,366	65,417	66,244	68,338	71,021	75,334

	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Capital	*7,432	*38,511	*30,623	**10,219	**10,460	**11,753	**11,883
Total	63,783	97,877	96,040	76,463	78,798	82,774	87,217

* Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on a cash basis.

** Capital investment relating to the non-controlled sector in these financial years is on an accruals basis.

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism, the Community Relations Core Funding Scheme and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a geographical basis.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54605/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Over the last ten years, my Department has received funding from the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in NI and the Border Region of Northern Ireland (Peace II) and the NI Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP).

Under EU regulations, the document retention period for a number of funding streams (measures) has now lapsed and the information is therefore not available to identify spend in South Belfast for these measures.

For the remaining 2 measures under Peace II, for which the document retention period had not lapsed at the date of this question being asked, information is set out below.

- (i) Measure 2.2 – Developing Children and Young People, recognised schools and the youth sector as having a crucial role to play in promoting the social inclusion of young people and helping them to build peace and reconciliation.

Under this measure, over 140 projects were supported initially with a further 65 projects supported under an Extension. A number of these projects worked across the North of Ireland and it has not been possible to identify specific spend in South Belfast. Of the remaining projects, the following spend was incurred directly in South Belfast over the period of the project:

Organisation	Total spend identified in South Belfast (Includes EU and Departmental matched spend) £'000
Belfast City Council	77
South Belfast Partnership	216
Opportunity Youth - Switch on to Employment	64
BELB- PLEASE South Project	51
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	77
Simon Community Northern Ireland	17
Park Education Resource Centre	89
Belfast Education and Library Board – Peer Education South and East	115
Taughmonagh Community Forum Limited	88
YouthAction Northern Ireland	126
The Belfast Foyer – Simon Community Northern Ireland	107
Total	1,026

Note: Table may not add due to roundings

- (ii) Measure 5.5 was implemented jointly by my Department and the Department of Education and Science (DES) in Dublin. Measure 5.5 brought into being cross-border partnerships between a wide variety of organisations that otherwise would not have occurred.

A total of 14 projects were funded under this measure and approximately 15,670 direct beneficiaries participated with a further 1,627 indirect beneficiaries. A number of exhibitions were held in the Ulster Museum under the "Young Citizen's in Museums" project; bursaries were paid to organisations based in South Belfast under the "N-CompasS" project; and

events were held at Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis under the "ISTA" project. However, it is not possible to identify the amount of spend specifically in the South Belfast area for this Measure.

Under BSP, Measure 2.4, Improving Opportunities for Lifelong Learning, one project was funded – the Sustaining Engagement at Learning (SEAL) project, which related to the activities of the Education Welfare Service in each of the then Education and Library Boards. Spend on this project was incurred between January 2004 to June 2007 and was primarily staffing related and was not directly attributable to specific schools on the finance system. Therefore it is not possible to provide details of spend in South Belfast on this measure.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of his Department's spend in Fermanagh in each year since 2010. (AQW 54747/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency in each complete financial year since 2010:

	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	92,028	94,193	94,580	91,301	100,658
Capital	3,706	3,430	2,902	4,311	10,004
Total	95,734	97,623	97,482	95,612	110,661

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail his departmental spending per traveller child compared to a settled child. (AQW 54991/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The costs per pupil are not readily available. Alongside delegated budgets, schools may receive other central funding, including resources for Statemented pupils, programme funds, Looked after Children, Newcomer pupils and other costs such as transport and administrative costs.

With regards to Travellers, as part of the school's delegated budget arrangements, each full-time pupil designated in the school census as being of the Traveller Community, including Roma children, generates an additional budget allocation for the school. In 2015-16 this equated to approximately £1,000 per pupil, distributed as part of the school's budget share. It is for schools to determine their spending priorities, from within the totality of funding they receive.

My Department also funds the Toybox Project for Traveller children in pre-school, and since 2014, the average cost per child within the project is approximately £1600.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail what direct measures he has implemented during his tenure to promote education within the Irish travelling community. (AQW 54993/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2013 my Department published the Traveller Child in Education Action Framework in response to the recommendations of the Taskforce on Traveller Education. The Framework is to ensure that Traveller children have the opportunity to benefit from educational opportunities on offer, and give them the best possible start in life.

In April 2013 the regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) was established. It is funded by my Department through the Education Authority and seeks to support schools, Traveller children and young people and their families across the north of Ireland. My Department also funds schools an additional amount of funding for each Traveller Child through the Common Funding Scheme. This equates to approximately £1,000 per pupil, distributed as part of the school's budget share.

My Department continues to fund the Toybox Project for Travellers which provides support to Traveller children and their parents before, during and after pre-school, and aims to facilitate understanding of the importance and value of supporting Traveller children's education.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. (AQW 54998/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Over the last ten years, my Department has received funding from the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in NI and the Border Region of Northern Ireland (Peace II) and the NI Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP).

Under EU regulations, the document retention period for a number of funding streams (measures) has now lapsed and the information is therefore not available to identify spend in West Tyrone for these measures.

For the remaining two measures under Peace II, for which the document retention period had not lapsed or has just lapsed at the date of this question being asked, information is set out below:

- (i) Measure 2.2 – Developing Children and Young People, recognised schools and the youth sector as having a crucial role to play in promoting the social inclusion of young people and helping them to build peace and reconciliation.

Under this measure, over 140 projects were supported initially with a further 65 projects supported under an Extension. A number of these projects worked across the North of Ireland and it has not been possible to identify specific spend in West Tyrone. Of the remaining projects, the following spend was incurred directly in West Tyrone over the period of the project:

Organisation	Total spend identified in West Tyrone (Includes EU and Departmental matched spend) £'000
Mournederg Partnership	194
Omagh Boys and Girls club	111
GG Training Enterprises	95
Graduball – (Grow Reconciliation and Develop Understanding through Basketball)	10
Omagh College	98
WELB – Alternative Education Support of Pupils (AESOP) - Strabane	121
Tyrone Training Services – F.I.N.T.O.N.A Project	7
WELB - AESOP South West	111
Total	746

Note: Table may not add due to roundings

- (ii) Measure 5.5 was implemented jointly by my Department and the Department of Education and Science (DES) in Dublin. Measure 5.5 brought into being cross-border partnerships between a wide variety of organisations that otherwise would not have occurred.

A total of 14 projects were funded under this measure and approximately 15,670 direct beneficiaries participated with a further 1,627 indirect beneficiaries. It has been identified that the following two projects were operational in the West Tyrone area, but a breakdown of specific costs is not available:

- The Reconciliation Youth Training Enterprise (RYTE) project was run jointly by Omagh and Donegal Youth Services and provided young people in Omagh and Donegal with the opportunity to improve their ICT skills. Approximately 45% of participants were from the Omagh region.
- The Lifelong Learning Through Sport Project target areas were the county of Donegal, the City of Derry and the district of Strabane. Target groups were brought together for cross-border exchange visits and residential courses, based around sport. The sporting activities would enable young people of school age to get to know, play and socialise with those of a different religious denomination, and gain knowledge of each other's sports and culture. Adult coaches in each location would undergo a programme of training and acquire a recognised sports coaching qualification. The project had approximately 5,877 participants which included 800 adults trained as coaches.

Of the remaining 12 projects in this Measure, it is not possible to identify the amount of spend specifically in West Tyrone.

Under BSP, Measure 2.4, Improving Opportunities for Lifelong Learning, one project was funded – the Sustaining Engagement at Learning (SEAL) project, which related to the activities of the Education Welfare Service in each of the then Education and Library Boards. Spend on this project was incurred between January 2004 to June 2007 and was primarily staffing related and was not directly attributable to specific schools on the finance system. Therefore it is not possible to provide details of spend in West Tyrone on this measure.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of teacher suspensions identified as being potentially or actually unlawful by his Department in each of the last five years; and what action has been taken.
(AQW 55002/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education (DE) does not employ teachers, and as such is not directly involved in employment matters, including the precautionary suspension of teachers. Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting.

The Department has, therefore, not identified any precautionary suspensions of teachers as being potentially or actually unlawful in each of the last five years.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education what action his Department has taken against schools, Boards of Governors and individuals that have acted unlawfully with regards to precautionary suspensions.

(AQW 55004/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has not taken any action against a school's Board of Governors in relation to a precautionary suspension.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many (i) teaching staff; and (ii) non-teaching staff have been appointed to Coláiste Dhoire post-primary school in Dungiven.

(AQW 55052/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not employ teachers. Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting; non teaching staff are employed by the Education Authority.

However, I have been advised that Colaiste Dhoire post-primary school in Dungiven currently employs 1 Principal and 3 teaching staff; 2 non-teaching staff are also employed at the school.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to reform the General Teaching Council.

(AQW 55119/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Any plans to reform or change the current remit of the General Teaching Council would require primary legislation and will be a matter for a future Executive and Assembly.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, given that the General Teaching Council consists of 33 members, for his assessment of whether it has a viable governance structure.

(AQW 55120/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: While the General Teaching Council is constituted through legislation, the Council is in the process of considering a Board Effectiveness Review report which includes a consideration of governance related matters. The Department is therefore subjecting the General Teaching Council to a significantly increased level of scrutiny to ensure that the ongoing issues are resolved in a constructive manner.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what action he has taken following the assessment of the General Teaching Council by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

(AQW 55121/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I have placed the General Teaching Council into special measures to address significant governance concerns and to strengthen the Department's current governance framework for the oversight of the Council. The Department is therefore subjecting the General Teaching Council to a significantly increased level of scrutiny to ensure that the ongoing issues are resolved in a constructive manner.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether the assessment of the General Teaching Council by the Department of Finance and Personnel will be published.

(AQW 55122/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: It would not be appropriate for the DFP Business Consultancy Service's Board Effectiveness Review report to be published at a time when my Department and the General Teaching Council are actively engaging in the consideration and implementation of the report's findings.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what consideration his Department is giving to restoring funding to Booktrust NI projects in 2016-17.

(AQW 55124/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I fully appreciate the concerns that were raised last year about the withdrawal of funding for Booktrust. I welcome the fact that Booktrust was able to find some alternative sponsorship last year to support elements of its work.

I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department's remit. In this context the £250,000 cost for Booktrust is the equivalent of 8 full-time teaching posts.

I have had to provide stability to the education budget and the education service moving forward and therefore restoring funding for Booktrust is simply not deliverable.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Education whether the transport assessment undertaken by the Education Authority, as part of the planning process for the new build for Dromore Primary School, considered the impact of an increase in the volume of traffic in the locality of the new school, specifically at the Hillsborough Road and Mossvale Road junction, Dromore.

(AQW 55128/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that as part of the planning application process for the new Dromore Central Primary School, a Traffic Assessment Form was submitted as required by Transport NI (formerly Roads Service).

Subsequent consultation with Transport NI in relation to the Traffic Assessment resulted in the inclusion of a number of traffic related conditions in the final Planning Permission which was granted on 25 August 2010. While these conditions do not specifically refer to the roads named above, the EA has confirmed that the requirements of these conditions will be implemented as part of the scheme to ensure there is a satisfactory means of access in the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has had any communication with the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland, regarding the equalisation of grades to assist students who want to attend university in the Republic of Ireland, but are hindered by the differentiation between A level grades and Leaving Certificate numerical points.

(AQW 55139/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Responsibility for admissions to universities in the south of Ireland rests with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) rather than the Department of Education and Skills.

CCEA, as the qualifications regulator here, has worked with the IUA in Dublin to ensure that A Level applicants for admission to Higher Education Institutions in the south of Ireland are not disadvantaged.

Two universities in the south, Trinity College Dublin and NUI Galway have put in place initiatives to encourage applications from A level students. In addition, the allocation of Central Applications Office (CAO) points for A Levels has been revised for university admissions from 2016.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what funding is provided by his Department to projects that encourage reading to pre-school children.

(AQW 55163/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department has a number of programmes, elements of which seek to encourage and support parents in the development of their children's social, emotional, communication and language skills, including reading with and to their children. Funding specific to the encouragement of reading to pre-school children cannot be disaggregated from the overall budget for the programmes.

The Education Works campaign is aimed at encouraging parents to get involved with their child's education including those parents with pre-school children and one of the recommended activities for parents is that they read with their child from an early age.

Extended Services funding of £158,000 is available to eligible non-statutory pre-school education settings and targets those children in the most deprived areas and is aimed at helping the social, emotional, communication and language skills of young children.

The Sure Start programme is wholly funded by the Department at around £25 million per annum. The 39 Sure Start projects provide a range of early language and vocabulary development opportunities to children. Effective speech and language support is a key element of Sure Start which includes reading from an early age. Sure Start has strong well established links with Libraries NI and projects work in partnership with parents and families to encourage an ongoing relationship with local libraries.

The Department has been working with DHSSPS on the Delivering Social Change Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). More than £3m is available for the forthcoming Getting Ready to Learn component of the EITP, which focuses on improving outcomes for children in pre-school by engaging and empowering parents to help them create and sustain positive home learning environments.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the comments by the NASUWT that the General Teaching Council is not fit for purpose and dysfunctional.

(AQW 55165/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: It is important that we have a properly regulated teaching workforce and it is equally important that we have a regulatory body that is fit for purpose. In view of the challenges being faced by the General Teaching Council, the Department is therefore subjecting the General Teaching Council to a significantly increased level of scrutiny to ensure that the ongoing issues are resolved in a constructive manner.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to ensure disciplinary actions against suspended teachers are dealt with quicker.

(AQW 55205/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education (DE) does not employ teachers, and as such is not directly involved in employment matters, including the precautionary suspension of teachers. Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting.

Whilst my Department has no remit to interfere in employment matters, it monitors precautionary suspension cases in an attempt to ensure that progress is being made. In addition, since February 2016, the Education Authority (EA) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) are required to submit progress reports on the requirement to ensure that a monthly case review of suspensions has been carried out. This issue is also a standing item on the agenda for EA and CCMS Governance and Accountability Review meetings.

The nature of precautionary suspensions can be very complex and a number of agencies can be involved in resolving issues relating to the suspension, such as Social Services, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Court Service and the Occupational Health Service. I acknowledge that precautionary suspensions can be lengthy, however, my main concern remains the welfare of children.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of organisations that have applied to the new Pathways Fund that were not previously funded by his Department's Early Years Fund.
(AQW 55215/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (which administers the Pathway Fund on behalf of DE) advises that there are a total of 164 applications from organisations that were not previously funded by the DE Early Years Fund.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Education whether (i) funding that is currently used to provide additional services for children and young people in voluntary sector youth centres in deprived communities will continue beyond March 2016; and (ii) his Department will commit to continue funding these services.
(AQW 55253/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: On 9 March, I announced my final budget allocations for 2016-17 which included £32.8m for Youth Services. An element of this funding is for the youth service to increase access to mainstream youth services in disadvantaged areas, with priority given to interface areas; and through outreach and detached youth work, to support the specific targeting of disadvantaged areas or communities of interest and those at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning.

I am not in a position to confirm funding commitments beyond 2016-17.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of senior management positions in the new Education Authority that will be based in Omagh.
(AQW 55263/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I favour decentralisation of public sector jobs in this case. No decisions have been taken by the Education Authority about future staffing requirements, or about the number of senior management positions that will be based in Omagh. In consultation with Trades Unions, the Education Authority will be developing a location strategy over the next 12 months which will address the matter of the location of its staff and functions.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education what safeguards he has put in place to ensure that jobs and future opportunities in the Education Authority are spread across Northern Ireland and not concentrated in Greater Belfast.
(AQW 55264/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I favour decentralisation of public sector jobs and believe that the Education Authority should be positioned at the heart of the local communities it serves, delivering services locally.

In consultation with Trades Unions, the Education Authority will be developing a location strategy over the next 12 months which will address the matter of the location of its staff and functions. Decisions on the location of staff will be subject to achieving value for money and in line with service requirements. They will also be subject to relevant statutory and policy requirements, including the assessment of equality considerations.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number and grade of the employees in the new Education Authority that will be based in Omagh.
(AQW 55265/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I favour decentralisation of public sector jobs in this case. No decisions have been taken by the Education Authority about future staffing requirements, or about the number of senior management positions that will be based in Omagh. In consultation with Trades Unions, the Education Authority will be developing a location strategy over the next 12 months which will address the matter of the location of its staff and functions.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to introduce the teaching of sign language into the schools curriculum.
(AQW 55279/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There is currently no statutory requirement for pupils to learn sign language. However, children should be given opportunities to engage with and demonstrate the skill of communication and to transfer their knowledge about communication concepts and skills to real-life meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

The modes of communication include talking and listening, reading and writing. Effective communication also includes non-verbal modes of communication, wider literacy and the use of multimedia and ICT technologies which may combine different modes. Children are encouraged to become effective communicators by using a range of techniques, forms and media to convey information and ideas creatively and appropriately. Therefore, schools may choose to introduce sign language in this context.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail the rationale for reducing nursery and pre-school provision for children in special education schools.

(AQW 55280/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I have asked the Education Authority to urgently revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision for children placed in special schools.

Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, I have called on the EA to provide me with assurances that there has been full and open engagement with those most directly affected by any decision on pre-school provision in special schools and that they have been listened to. I have also emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail what communication his Department had with the 39 special schools in Northern Ireland regarding the reduction in hours for nursery and pre-school children with special educational needs.

(AQW 55281/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) rests with schools and the Education Authority (EA), which is responsible for identifying, assessing and, in appropriate cases, making provision for children with SEN. As such, it would be a matter for the EA to communicate and consult with those stakeholders affected by its decision regarding pre-school provision for children in special schools.

Given the current level of concerns and what I consider to be a lack of proper consultation by the Authority with parents and schools on this matter, I have instructed the EA to formally revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision in special schools.

Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, I have called on the EA to provide me with assurances that there has been full and open engagement with those most directly affected by any decision on pre-school provision in special schools and that they have been listened to.

I have also emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what public consultation was carried out by his Department prior to the decision to reduce hours for nursery and pre-school children with special educational needs.

(AQW 55283/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) rests with schools and the Education Authority (EA), which is responsible for identifying, assessing and, in appropriate cases, making provision for children with SEN. As such, it would be a matter for the EA to communicate and consult with those stakeholders affected by its decision regarding pre-school provision for children in special schools.

Given the current level of concerns and what I consider to be a lack of proper consultation by the Authority with parents and schools on this matter, I have instructed the EA to formally revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision in special schools.

Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, I have called on the EA to provide me with assurances that there has been full and open engagement with those most directly affected by any decision on pre-school provision in special schools and that they have been listened to.

I have also emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children with special educational needs attending a nursery or pre-school placement in (a) a special educational needs school; or (b) any other nursery or pre-school setting.

(AQW 55299/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of pre-school age children with special educational needs in special schools and mainstream in 2015/16 is as follows:

	(a) Special school ¹	(b) Other nursery or pre-school setting ²	Total
Statemented (SEN stage 5)	84	187	271

	(a) Special school ¹	(b) Other nursery or pre-school setting ²	Total
SEN stages 1-4	103	2,698	2,801
Total pupils with SEN³	187	2,885	3,072

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Special school figures refers to any pupils attending special schools aged 2 or 3 on the 1st July 2015.
- 2 'Other nursery or pre-school setting' refers to funded children in voluntary and private preschools, nursery schools and nursery and reception classes in primary schools.
- 3 Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children with special educational needs and of nursery age that are (a) in a part time nursery or pre-school place; (b) in a full time nursery or pre-school place; and (c) not in a nursery or pre-school place.

(AQW 55300/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Pre-school age children with special educational needs split by full-time and part-time, 2015/16^{1,2,3}

	Statemented pupils	SEN (stages 1-4)	Total SEN pupils
(a) Full-time	140	1,280	1,420
(b) Part-time	114	1,208	1,322
Pupils where data held by the Department cannot disaggregate to full-time/part-time level ⁴	17	313	330
Total	271	2,801	3,072

The Department does not hold any information on pupils who are not enrolled in a nursery or pre-school place.

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 4 Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- 5 Figures refer to funded children in voluntary and private preschools, nursery schools, nursery and reception classes in primary schools and pupils aged 2 or 3 on the 1st July 2015 attending special schools.
- 6 Full-time/part-time status for special school pupils is as recorded by schools. This data is not validated by the Department.
- 7 This data includes nursery schools that have both full-time and part-time pupils. As data is collected from nursery schools at a school level, this cannot be disaggregated to pupils with special education needs only.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Education what action has been taken to identify a site in the Portrush area for a new build for Mill Strand Integrated Primary and Nursery School.

(AQW 55302/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There has been no work undertaken by the Department to identify a site in the Portrush area for a new build for Mill Strand Integrated Primary and Nursery School. Until a school is 'announced' as a major capital investment project to be advanced in planning, no work will be progressed by the Department in respect of a new build.

I am currently considering making a further announcement on Major Capital Investment Projects in the primary sector before the end of the current mandate.

In addition, the Fresh Start Agreement makes provision for up to £50m of new capital funding per year for the next 10 years for a programme of investment in shared and integrated education projects, which is welcomed.

Discussions are progressing well with Northern Ireland Office, Treasury and the Department of Finance and Personnel to determine the parameters within which this additional funding can be utilised; however I am not yet in a position how this funding will be allocated.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 54662/11-16, how this response is compatible with the indication in the departmental Annual Resource Accounts that his Department employs 650 people.

(AQW 55341/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department's Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 stated: "the Department employs over 650 staff". This approximate headcount staffing figure included senior civil servants, general service staff and staff in all analogous grades who were employed in the Department at 31 March 2015; vacancies were excluded.

The response to AQW 54662/11-16 provided staffing figures at 25 February 2016. In line with the request, the figures provided were for general service staff only and excluded senior civil servants, all analogous grades and vacancies. Staff on temporary promotion were included at the grade to which they were temporarily promoted.

The staffing figures in the following table are in line with the parameters used in the 2014/15 Resource Accounts:

Staff Grades	At 31 March 2015		At 25 February 2016	
	Full Time Equivalent	Headcount	Full Time Equivalent	Headcount
Includes: Senior Civil Servants General Service Analogous Grades Excludes: Vacancies	610.71	653	544.55	577

The reduction in the staffing figures between 31 March 2015 and 25 February 2016 is due to staff leaving the Department in the interim period and can be largely explained by the exit of 71 staff under tranches 1 – 4 of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the savings made at management level following the transition from Education and Library Boards to the Education Authority.

(AQW 55358/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2014 the Education and Library Boards had a senior management complement of 51 staff costing approximately £4.2 million a year. It is anticipated that the cost of the new senior management structure, comprising 25 staff, will be approximately £2.7 million a year.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the current salary bill at management level in the Education Authority.

(AQW 55359/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The salary bill at management level in the Education Authority in March 2016 equates to £3.04 million a year, inclusive of employer contributions. This covers the Chief Executive, Directors and those reporting to the Chief Executive and Directors.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pre-school pupils, attending special school nursery classes, that have a physical disability; and the school they attend.

(AQW 55440/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2015/16, 13 pre-school age pupils attending special schools have been recorded as having a physical special educational need.

The schools which these pupils attend are:

- Ardnashee School & College
- Arvalee School and Resource Centre
- Ceara Special School
- Clifton Special School
- Mitchell House Special School
- Parkview Special School
- Sperrinview Special School
- Tor Bank Special School

Source: NI school census

Notes:

8 Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice that have any one of the following needs recorded:

- Cerebral Palsy

- Spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus
- Muscular dystrophy
- Significant accidental injury
- Any other physical need.

Needs recorded refers to any special educational need rather than primary need.

- 9 Figures refer to pupils aged 2 or 3 on the 1st July 2015 attending special schools.
10. Numbers of pupils with physical needs at an individual school level cannot be disclosed due to potential identification of individual pupils.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the estimate of the cost of EU regulation with regards to departmental functions.

(AQW 54914/11-16)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department estimates an annual cost of £690k relating to regulation for the European Social Fund programme.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of people who have enrolled in Further Education courses in the hospitality and tourism sectors in each of the last five years; and how many have secured employment in this sector following graduation.

(AQW 54932/11-16)

Dr Farry: The most recent figures available, for the period 2010 - 2015, show that 31,296 individuals enrolled in 'Hospitality and Catering' or 'Travel and Tourism' at the six Further Education Colleges.

The figures are correct as at 19th November 2015 using the subject sector area Hospitality & Catering and Travel and Tourism for all colleges.

The Department for Employment and Learning does not hold data on the number who have secured employment in this sector following graduation.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail his Department's careers policy for older people.

(AQW 54934/11-16)

Dr Farry: My Department's Careers Service offers impartial and personalised advice and guidance on an all-age basis, provided by professionally qualified advisers. The aim is to ensure that all individuals, regardless of age or ability, have access to independent, high quality advice which helps them to maximise their potential and contribute to their community and the local economy.

The refreshed careers strategy Preparing for Success 2015-2020, which I launched recently with the Education Minister, sets out the vision and aims for the careers system for the coming years including the aspiration that all individuals are encouraged to develop the skills and qualifications most valued by employers.

Careers Advisers can help individuals to explore their personal strengths, skills and abilities and explore opportunities for re-skilling and up-skilling, informed by the anticipated needs of the labour market. Help is also available for those facing redundancy or unemployment, and individuals hoping to return to the labour market.

In 2014/2015 the Careers Service delivered 16,608 careers guidance interviews with adults and has recently developed a multi-channel delivery approach which includes webchat and telephony as well as face-to-face services. This ensures that individuals are able to access careers support at a time, and in a way, that best suits their needs.

Careers Advisers are located in Careers Resource Centres, Jobcentres and Jobs and Benefits Offices across Northern Ireland and details are on the NIDirect website.

The careers strategy Preparing for Success 2015-2010 can be found at;
<https://www.delni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/Careers%20Strategy%20%28web%29.pdf>.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the final report on research into the skills needs of the tourism industry.

(AQW 54935/11-16)

Dr Farry: Pursuant to AQW 48375/11-15, PACEC (formerly RSM McClure Watters) are expected to present the draft report to my Department in mid-March after requesting a short extension to the original deadline.

It is anticipated that a final version of the report will be completed by the end of March and will take account of comments from the Steering Committee, which was established by my Department to advise and guide us on the scope and remit of the research.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) what strength of internet connection is required by students applying for distance learning courses at each local university; (ii) how many people applied to each university in the last three years; and (iii) how many applicants were rejected to due an inadequate internet connection.

(AQW 54951/11-16)

Dr Farry:

- (i) My Department does not hold information regarding the technical requirements for online distance learning courses. You may wish to contact the institutions directly.
- (ii) My Department does not hold application data. However, the table below shows the number of first year enrolments on distance learning courses at each of Northern Ireland's higher education institutions, in 2014/15.

	Queen's University Belfast	Ulster University	Stranmillis University College	St Mary's University College	The Open University	Total
2012/13	100	290	0	0	2,120	2,510
2013/14	115	280	0	0	1,545	1,945
2014/15	95	265	0	0	1,375	1,735

- (iii) My Department does not hold information regarding why applications were unsuccessful.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much capital funding his Department has given each university in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55032/11-16)

Dr Farry: The capital funding my Department has given each university in each of the last five financial years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Capital Funding £m	
	Ulster University	Queen's University Belfast
2010-11	9.0	14.4
2011-12	2.2	3.3
2012-13	4.8	6.0
2013-14	6.8	9.9
2014-15	13.3	22.6

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much revenue funding his Department has given each university in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55033/11-16)

Dr Farry: The funding provided by my Department to Queen's University Belfast (QUB), Ulster University (UU) and the Open University (OU) in the last five financial years is set out in the table below.

Financial Year	University		
	QUB £m	UU £m	OU £m
2010/11	122.3	99.0	0.1
2011/12	105.2	85.5	0.1
2012/13	106.4	87.2	0.1
2013/14	105.9	85.2	4.2
2014/15	100.9	80.9	5.2

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme was spent in South Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55044/11-16)

Dr Farry: Under the 2007-2013 ESF Programme, there were no voluntary or community projects funded which were headquartered in the South Down area.

Funding for many of the projects supported, and under the Government Programmes strand of the ESF Programme, operated on an NI-wide basis, and the Department cannot accurately identify the costs which relate to a specific constituency.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55069/11-16)

Dr Farry: The European Social Fund (ESF) is the Department's primary source of funding from the European Union. The Programme is delivered through a variety of employability-focussed projects across Northern Ireland.

Funding under both the current (2014-20) and previous (2007-13) the ESF Programmes is based on 40% European Commission contribution; 25% DEL contribution; and 35% private or public match funding contribution through a variety of different funding sources.

Many of the projects supported by the Programme operate on an NI-wide basis, and the Department cannot accurately identify the costs which relate to a specific constituency.

The table below sets out the amount of funding awarded to projects which were headquartered in West Tyrone. The Department is only required to retain financial records for the preceding seven years:

Voluntary and Community Strand of ESF Programme

Financial Year	European Commission ESF Contribution £ (40%)	DEL Contribution £ (25%)	Match Funding £ (35%)
2008/09	160,040	100,025	140,035
2009/10	282,706	176,691	247,367
2010/11	231,084	144,427	202,198
2011/12	255,312	159,570	223,398
2012/13	255,802	159,876	223,826
2013/14	332,920	208,075	291,305
2014/15	346,267	216,417	302,983
2015/16	1,242,464	776,540	1,087,156

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much of the European Social Fund Programme funding is projected to be spent in South Down in the next five years.

(AQW 55105/11-16)

Dr Farry: There are currently no projects funded which are headquartered in the South Down constituency under the first call of European Social Fund 2014 – 2020 Programme. Twelve of the 67 funded projects cater for participants living in South Down, but it is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the value of this activity. A second call for applications will commence in 2018.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people attended the Bangor Jobs Fair at the Marine Court Hotel.

(AQW 55244/11-16)

Dr Farry: The number of people who attended the North Down Jobs Fair was 813.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many employers attended the Bangor Jobs Fair held at the Marine Court Hotel.

(AQW 55273/11-16)

Dr Farry: The number of employers who attended the North Down Jobs Fair was 50.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many jobs were on offer at the Bangor Jobs Fair at the Marine Court Hotel.

(AQW 55322/11-16)

Dr Farry: The number of jobs on offer at the North Down Jobs Fair was 917.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any discussions he has had with Westminster Ministers to reduce the rate of VAT on local hospitality and tourism

(AQO 9844/11-16)

Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): I attended a meeting of Devolved Tourism Ministers in Edinburgh on 1 March 2016 at which I raised the issue of the rate of VAT in the local hospitality and tourism sectors directly with David Evennett MP, Acting Sports, Tourism and Heritage Minister. He has undertaken to complete a report based on the Republic of Ireland's experience and make immediate representations to HM Treasury on this issue.

In addition, my Department worked with DFP in providing evidence, both written and oral, for the Finance Minister to submit to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee as part of its inquiry into promoting the tourism industry in Northern Ireland through the tax system. The case was made that a reduction in tourism VAT had the potential to help support and grow our tourism economy further and improve the competitiveness of the industry as a whole.

MPs from Northern Ireland have regularly added their voice along with their counterparts in Great Britain to debates and calls for action on this issue. Recognising the case for a reduction in tourism VAT, previous Enterprise and Finance Ministers have pressed the Government on this matter. Unfortunately Her Majesty's Government has held a consistent line that such a change could not be applied exclusively to Northern Ireland, and that the Government had no plans to introduce a reduced rate of VAT for tourism across the UK as a whole.

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to Bombardier staff that are being made redundant, what discussions he has had regarding opportunities in other aerospace companies and in the manufacturing sector.

(AQO 9846/11-16)

Mr Bell: Since Bombardier's announcement on 17 February 2016 of its plans to reduce its workforce, I have been working very closely with the Minister for Employment and Learning to do all that is possible to limit the impact of the redundancies. I feel confident that as a number of Northern Ireland manufacturing companies continue to expand, including those that operate in the aerospace supply chain, there is the potential for them to employ additional people over the medium term.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the exclusion of Whitehead from the Northern Ireland natural gas network.

(AQO 9848/11-16)

Mr Bell: Local extensions to the natural gas network, such as to Whitehead, are a matter for consideration between the Utility Regulator and the gas industry, and will take into account the economic viability of connecting new areas.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how his Department is raising the profile of West Belfast as a tourist destination.

(AQO 9849/11-16)

Mr Bell: Supporting the development and promotion of the Belfast destination including West Belfast is a priority for my Department and Tourism NI.

Through a combination of funding programmes, Tourism NI has supported a number of projects in West Belfast including, An Culturlann, The Divis and Black Mountain Multi use Trails project and The 'West Awakes' project with financial assistance totalling £546,879.

Tourism NI has also consistently supported a number of events in West Belfast, including the August Féile and the spring festival Féile an Earraigh with funding totalling £377,500.

In 2015, Tourism NI financially supported Belfast City Council in the development of a Belfast Tourism Strategy 2015 – 2020 in which the 'City Quarters', including the Gaeltacht Quarter, Féile an Phobail and the murals are highlighted as key tourism strengths in the city.

Tourism NI continues to work closely with the Council and other organisations to support, develop and promote the tourism product in West Belfast.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the progress of the north-south electricity interconnector.

(AQO 9850/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Planning Appeals Commission has announced that the Public Inquiry into the North South Interconnector will recommence on 21 June 2016. The planning hearing in the Republic of Ireland commenced on 7 March 2016.

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how he plans to mitigate any commercial losses to small businesses following his series of announcements in relation to the closure of the Renewable Heat Incentive.

(AQO 9851/11-16)

Mr Bell: My decision to close the Renewable Heat Incentive was not a decision taken lightly. I recognise the impact that this will have on the local renewable heating sector and wider industry. However, my immediate priority was to prevent further financial pressures in the short term. Once analysis of closure has been undertaken I will consider the scheme's future including impacts arising from closure.

However, I should point out that, for existing participants, support will continue for 20 years for non-domestic and 7 years for domestic installations.

This will bring around £130 million into Northern Ireland over the next 5 years. This is in addition to the £50 million already provided under the Renewable Heat Incentive schemes since 2012.

Department of the Environment

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all the listed buildings in the North Down.

(AQW 53891/11-16)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Based on the 1974 ward boundaries, against which my Department holds such records, the total number of listed buildings in the former North Down Borough Council area is 294. The North Down parliamentary constituency also includes two electoral wards (in Donaghadee) of the former Ards Borough Council, which contain a further 56 listed buildings. This gives a total of 350 listed buildings in the North Down constituency. You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974; the figures should therefore not be taken as definitive in relation to current constituency boundaries.

This figure is subject to ongoing review as requests are made for buildings to be listed or delisted. North Down is also currently being reviewed under the Second Survey process, during which all records will be reviewed.

The detail of all of these listed buildings may be accessed electronically at the following link: <https://www.doeni.gov.uk/services/buildings-database>. Once you have accepted the terms and conditions of the site, a search may be carried out by Council area (using the previous Council areas as this has been the geographic basis of the listing process) – in this case Ards and North Down.

The two former Borough Councils and the new Ards and North Down Borough Council - statutory consultees in the listing process - have been provided with a copy of each listing in their area since the introduction of the relevant legislation in the early 1970's.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the Cam Burn windfarm.

(AQW 54449/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Pursuant to Section 29 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has requested an opportunity to appear before the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) for the purpose of making representation on following my opinion to approve the application.

My officials have provided the Planning Appeals Commission with the necessary papers in order for them to make the arrangements for the hearing. The timetabling for the hearing will be a matter for the PAC.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of any regionally significant planning applications along the route of the proposed A6 Dungiven to Derry dualling.

(AQW 54613/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I am not aware of any regionally significant planning applications along the route of the proposed A6 Dungiven to Derry dualling.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's current estimation of the number of (a) grey; and (b) red squirrels.

(AQW 54617/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Accurate population counts for reclusive wild mammals are difficult to formulate and generally rely on extrapolations of sighting data and habitat modelling.

A Queen's University study by Dennis O'Teangana in 1999 estimated a figure of 10,000 red squirrels across Northern Ireland from field and sighting data.

The 'All Ireland Species Action Plan - Red Squirrel, 2008' refers to a population of at least 250,000 grey squirrels and 40,000 red squirrels on the island of Ireland; the latter in proportionate agreement with O'Teangana's original estimate. An approximate land area comparison would estimate 60, – 70,000 grey squirrels for Northern Ireland. The recently published 'Irish Squirrel Survey 2012' by Dr. Colin Lawton at the NUI, Galway (2015), indicates that grey squirrels have spread into many areas of Northern Ireland where they were previously absent but this expansion has perhaps not been as explosive as originally predicted. The red squirrel still persists across Northern Ireland with healthy populations being found in Fermanagh and north-east Antrim.

NIEA is currently working with members of the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum to obtain up to date presence / absence data for both grey and red squirrels across Northern Ireland.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail any plans or proposals his Department has in conjunction with local councils to reduce the time it takes to approve planning applications.

(AQW 54628/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In order to monitor performance of councils with regard to their planning functions, three statutory planning indicators for councils were introduced on 1 April 2015. These cover the processing of local and major applications and enforcement cases. The first quarterly planning statistics bulletin, which was published in November 2015, highlighted performance of councils against the three statutory planning indicators for the first three months of the new two-tier planning system (April – June 2015).

While neither the major nor local indicators were met, these results have to be seen in context of the new two-tier system bedding-in. The creation of the councils and the transfer of planning functions represented a major challenge to both central and local government. Not only were the new 11 councils being established, but also a significantly reformed planning system was being introduced, with new processes for development management, local development plans, enforcement and appeals. In addition, many of the applications processed during this period were applications received by the Department during the months leading up to the transfer to councils, and these would undoubtedly have had an adverse impact upon processing times. It will still take some time for these legacy applications to be processed through the system. While noting that some elements of performance slipped, I was pleased to note that other elements, such as the processing of enforcement cases and the determining of applications over 1 year old, had improved.

There are no plans to change the statutory indicators and standards for 2016/17 as the system is still bedding-in. I am confident that the immense amount of work undertaken by the councils in integrating their new planning functions will start to bear fruit in the coming months.

I believe there is a collective responsibility between local and central government to ensure there is an effective planning system. My Department is working with councils, through various engagement channels such as the Ministerial Planning Group (chaired by me) and the Strategic Planning Group (chaired by the Chief Planner), to drive forward continuous improvement and best practice.

My Department is also currently taking forward work with councils on the introduction of a new planning performance framework in order to broaden the range of planning indicators (beyond the three statutory indicators).

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the total cost of the reform of local government in each new authority area, broken down by area of expenditure

(AQW 54635/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Expenditure funded by my Department relating to Local Government reform over the period April 2008 to January 2016 amounts to £26.1 million.

This expenditure includes funding provided to Councils for a wide range of costs such as severance payments for councillors, costs associated with operating shadow councils, transition committees, capacity building, staff induction and winding up costs. In addition to funding provided by my Department to Councils for reform, my Department has also directly incurred expenditure related to the reform of Local Government.

I have placed a table in the assembly library which provides an analysis of the expenditure incurred.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment to detail how much has been spent on severance for (i) former councillors; and (ii) council employees following the reform of local government, broken down by council area.

(AQW 54637/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The table attached provides details of funding provided by my Department to Councils for severance payments to former councillors, broken down by council area.

My Department has not provided any funding to Councils for severance payments in respect of council employees. Such payments, if made, would be paid by the respective Council. My Department does not hold the financial information on severance payments made to former council employees.

District Council	Amount £
Antrim	57,200
Ards	80,600
Armagh	72,600
Ballymena	174,200
Ballymoney	100,000
Banbridge	74,000
Belfast	92,000
Carrickfergus	90,200
Castlereagh	87,000
Coleraine	106,800
Cookstown	95,800
Craigavon	71,600
Derry	97,000
Down	116,600
Dungannon	167,400
Fermanagh	95,400
Larne	122,600
Limavady	41,800
Lisburn	18,600
Magherafelt	47,600
Moyle	87,000
Newry & Mourne	163,400
Newtownabbey	21,800
North Down	102,200
Omagh	95,200
Strabane	48,000
Total	2,326,600

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the investigation and clean-up of the illegal dumping site at Mobouy road; and whether any action is being taken against the perpetrators.

(AQW 54673/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department initiated an environmental assessment of the Mobuoy Road illegal waste site in January 2015. The purpose of this assessment was to provide (i) a preliminary assessment of the risks supported by exploratory site investigations, (ii) an initial appraisal of remediation options, (iii) short-term leachate measures (iv) gas risk assessment and (v) a 12 month environmental monitoring programme.

These investigations have improved our understanding of the nature and extent of waste illegally disposed at the site. At the stakeholder meeting on 25 November 2015, the estimated volume of controlled waste illegally disposed at the Mobuoy waste site was reported to be a minimum of 913,105m³. An additional estimate of 252,050m³ of controlled waste is present in the area of the former licensed landfill some of which has been deposited illegally.

This study has demonstrated that both the City Industrial Waste site and the Campsie Sands and Gravels site are actively producing landfill gas and are likely to continue doing so at levels causing potential risk to human health. Landfill gas management will therefore be an important factor in designing and implementing any remediation treatments at these sites.

The initial shorted listed remediation options presented to my Department are:

- a) excavation and disposal;
- b) on site treatment that may involve one or more treatments such as segregation of waste, recovery and recycling; and
- c) containment using a capping system incorporating gas management and hydraulic barriers.

To build confidence in these short listed options, my Department secured the services of Professor Phil Morgan at SiRiUS Geotechnical and Environmental Ltd. to peer review the short listed options. SiRiUS, broadly agrees that the remediation options appraisal presented by WYG is "a reasonable evaluation of remediation options based on the current level of knowledge and draws realistic but high level conclusions as to the most appropriate overall remediation strategy for the site". The size and complexity of the site (46 hectares) means that remediation will not be a 'quick fix'.

Further to this, my Department is actively pursuing a number of actions, namely:

- a) Continuing to undertake short-term leachate management actions such as the removal of 100,000 litres of surface runoff on 21 Feb 2016;
- b) initiating a new contract starting in the w/c 7 March 2016 to deliver a quantitative risk assessment protecting water quality in the River Faughan. This assessment will be supported by some additional investigations;
- c) continuing with the ongoing environmental monitoring programme and finalising the preliminary assessment of risks.

The remediation options will be further evaluated and an integrated remediation strategy developed with full costs once the quantitative risk assessment to protect the River Faughan is completed. The priority of this remediation strategy is to protect water quality of the River Faughan and ensure the clean-up provides value for money. A comprehensive environmental monitoring programme is in place at the site and the River Faughan. The data shows no adverse impacts on water quality neither in the River Faughan nor to water quality at NI Water's abstraction point at Carnmoney. NIEA is sharing its data with NI Water to ensure that NI Water's risk assessments are kept up-to-date and fully informed.

Additionally, to inform and keep Stakeholders up-to-date with project developments, DoE has set-up a new web page on its web site at: <https://www.doeni.gov.uk/publications/mobuoy-road-waste-site-project>

To close, a file on NIEA's investigation into the alleged activities at Mobuoy Road was submitted to the Public Prosecution Service some time ago. As a result, an associated criminal case now remains before the courts. The latest court hearing, one element in the continuing process, is scheduled to take place on Friday 4 March 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact that the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 will have on wedding car companies.

(AQW 54694/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (the Act) came into force in April 2008, following the passage of the Taxis Bill through the Assembly legislative process and was subsequently passed by the Assembly unopposed. This was a continuation of wedding cars being regulated under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, which already required the vehicles and drivers to be licensed. The key rationale for the sector being regulated is because wedding cars are vehicles which carry passengers for hire or reward in the course of their business, as do taxis. I accept that due to the nature of the wedding car industry the frequency of carrying passengers for hire and reward is less than that of a traditional taxi. However the safety of passengers is no less important than a customer in a taxi and for that reason it was decided they should be included in the Taxis Act, a decision endorsed by the Environment Committee during the Committee stage of the Bill.

In terms of impact, cars used solely for weddings are exempt from Taxi Operator Licensing. Drivers are exempt from wearing taxi driver badges. Vehicles are exempt from taxi metering, roof signs and external taxi licence plates. Further, the new Taxi Licence Regulations mean that there are many more types of vehicles which can be used as wedding cars, as under the old regime you could not use a 2 door or soft top (convertible) vehicle as a wedding car. This is an issue the wedding car industry has been raising with the Department for many years and I am glad to be able to finally resolve it.

From a legislative perspective my Department has done all it can, within the scope of the existing primary legislation. Removing wedding cars from the Taxis Act will require consultation and a Primary legislative amendment. The Act does not include powers to make exemptions from either taxi vehicle or driver licensing requirements.

I met with representatives from the Wedding Car industry recently and they expressed concerns about the current arrangements which they see as too onerous and disproportionate for their industry. In particular I have listened to their concerns around new drivers to the industry that they feel have been adversely impacted by the new Taxi Driver Licence Regulations. I have asked my officials to look at how we can provide assistance and reassurance to the industry as they transition from the current regime to the new regime coming into force in May 2016. I also indicated that in line with the full implementation of all Primary legislation the Taxis Act will be subject to review and I would expect that the new Minister of the Department for Infrastructure would instigate this process as quickly as possible in the next Assembly mandate. As part of this review I would expect to see consultation on whether wedding cars should remain within the scope of the legislation or removed and licensed in a more proportionate way.

In terms of engagement with the sector, the consultations undertaken 2005 and 2006 (the topic was The Regulation of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles 2005) were responded to by some wedding car operators. At that time it was argued by those

respondents that the Department should do more to recognise the needs of wedding car providers and to prosecute the many unlicensed operators in this sector. This position was also expressed during the 13 week Consideration Stage of the Taxis Bill to the Environment Committee. Since that time I and my officials have had a number of meetings with representatives of the Wedding Car Industry to listen to their concerns and on occasions they have been accompanied by elected representatives.

The Department has also consulted on a series of issues including taxi licensing, special occasion and novelty vehicles and taxi operator licensing during which all taxi drivers and operators were asked for their views on how the Department were implementing the Act.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) whether wedding car companies were included in the initial consultation for the Taxis Act (NI) 2008; (ii) the nature of any consultation with wedding car companies that took place; and (iii) what communication his Department has had with wedding car companies since the initial consultation.

(AQW 54695/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (the Act) came into force in April 2008, following the passage of the Taxis Bill through the Assembly legislative process and was subsequently passed by the Assembly unopposed. This was a continuation of wedding cars being regulated under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, which already required the vehicles and drivers to be licensed. The key rationale for the sector being regulated is because wedding cars are vehicles which carry passengers for hire or reward in the course of their business, as do taxis. I accept that due to the nature of the wedding car industry the frequency of carrying passengers for hire and reward is less than that of a traditional taxi. However the safety of passengers is no less important than a customer in a taxi and for that reason it was decided they should be included in the Taxis Act, a decision endorsed by the Environment Committee during the Committee stage of the Bill.

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I met with representatives from the Wedding Car industry recently and they expressed concerns about the current arrangements which they see as too onerous and disproportionate for their industry. In particular I have listened to their concerns around new drivers to the industry that they feel have been adversely impacted by the new Taxi Driver Licence Regulations. I have asked my officials to look at how we can provide assistance and reassurance to the industry as they transition from the current regime to the new regime coming into force in May 2016. I also indicated that in line with the full implementation of all Primary legislation the Taxis Act will be subject to review and I would expect that the new Minister of the Department for Infrastructure would instigate this process as quickly as possible in the next Assembly mandate. As part of this review I would expect to see consultation on whether wedding cars should remain within the scope of the legislation or removed and licensed in a more proportionate way.

In terms of engagement with the sector, the consultations undertaken 2005 and 2006 (the topic was The Regulation of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles 2005) were responded to by some wedding car operators. At that time it was argued by those respondents that the Department should do more to recognise the needs of wedding car providers and to prosecute the many unlicensed operators in this sector. This position was also expressed during the 13 week Consideration Stage of the Taxis Bill to the Environment Committee. Since that time I and my officials have had a number of meetings with representatives of the Wedding Car Industry to listen to their concerns and on occasions they have been accompanied by elected representatives.

The Department has also consulted on a series of issues including taxi licensing, special occasion and novelty vehicles and taxi operator licensing during which all taxi drivers and operators were asked for their views on how the Department were implementing the Act.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to exclude wedding car companies from the Taxis Act (NI) 2008.

(AQW 54696/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (the Act) came into force in April 2008, following the passage of the Taxis Bill through the Assembly legislative process and was subsequently passed by the Assembly unopposed. This was a continuation of wedding cars being regulated under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, which already required the vehicles and drivers to be licensed. The key rationale for the sector being regulated is because wedding cars are vehicles which carry passengers for hire or reward in the course of their business, as do taxis. I accept that due to the nature of the wedding car industry the frequency of carrying passengers for hire and reward is less than that of a traditional taxi. However the safety of passengers is no less important than a customer in a taxi and for that reason it was decided they should be included in the Taxis Act, a decision endorsed by the Environment Committee during the Committee stage of the Bill.

In terms of impact, cars used solely for weddings are exempt from Taxi Operator Licensing. Drivers are exempt from wearing taxi driver badges. Vehicles are exempt from taxi metering, roof signs and external taxi licence plates. Further, the new Taxi

Licence Regulations mean that there are many more types of vehicles which can be used as wedding cars, as under the old regime you could not use a 2 door or soft top (convertible) vehicle as a wedding car. This is an issue the wedding car industry has been raising with the Department for many years and I am glad to be able to finally resolve it.

From a legislative perspective my Department has done all it can, within the scope of the existing primary legislation. Removing wedding cars from the Taxis Act will require consultation and a Primary legislative amendment. The Act does not include powers to make exemptions from either taxi vehicle or driver licensing requirements.

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The Department has also consulted on a series of issues including taxi licensing, special occasion and novelty vehicles and taxi operator licensing during which all taxi drivers and operators were asked for their views on how the Department were implementing the Act.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail what communication he has had with the Driver and Vehicle Agency regarding changes to the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 in order to protect wedding car companies; and to detail (i) a time frame for this communication; and (ii) any outcomes from the communication.
(AQW 54697/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (the Act) came into force in April 2008, following the passage of the Taxis Bill through the Assembly legislative process and was subsequently passed by the Assembly unopposed. This was a continuation of wedding cars being regulated under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, which already required the vehicles and drivers to be licensed. The key rationale for the sector being regulated is because wedding cars are vehicles which carry passengers for hire or reward in the course of their business, as do taxis. I accept that due to the nature of the wedding car industry the frequency of carrying passengers for hire and reward is less than that of a traditional taxi. However the safety of passengers is no less important than a customer in a taxi and for that reason it was decided they should be included in the Taxis Act, a decision endorsed by the Environment Committee during the Committee stage of the Bill.

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The Department has also consulted on a series of issues including taxi licensing, special occasion and novelty vehicles and taxi operator licensing during which all taxi drivers and operators were asked for their views on how the Department were implementing the Act.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment on how many occasions each council has used its powers on (i) high hedges legislation; and (ii) fining owners for dog fouling, in each of the past five years.
(AQW 54740/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 came into operation on March 2012. While the legislation was introduced by my Department, responsibility for its implementation and use of enforcement powers rests with the Councils. The Department does not collate data on high hedges legislation and therefore is not aware of the number of occasions the powers were used.

The information you seek in relation to fining owners for dog fouling is available and is contained in the attached Annex 1.

Annex 1

AQW 54740/11-16 – Number of fixed Penalty Notices issued in relation to dog fouling between 2010 and 2015

New Council District	Council District	Dog Fouling Number of Fixed Penalty Notices Issued				
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Antrim	0	0	2	1	4
	Newtownabbey	33	17	16	24	8
Mid & East Antrim	Ballymena	2	9	6	8	6
	Carrickfergus	0	3	0	2	1
	Larne	3	2	8	6	1
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Armagh	2	5	3	7	10
	Banbridge	0	1	3	1	3
	Craigavon	50	38	48	44	27
Belfast	Belfast	160	92	189	223	152
Causeway Coast & Glens	Ballymoney	1	0	1	1	0
	Coleraine	33	17	8	25	25
	Limavady	1	0	1	0	0
	Moyle	2	1	2	1	0
Derry City & Strabane	Derry City	1	3	1	11	10
	Strabane	2	2	7	10	4
Fermanagh & Omagh	Fermanagh	0	0	1	9	6
	Omagh	0	1	2	3	3
Mid Ulster	Cookstown	1	0	1	0	0
	Dungannon & South Tyrone	0	0	3	3	1
	Magherafelt	1	0	0	2	3
Newry, Mourne & Down	Down	10	16	9	13	19
	Newry & Mourne	5	4	4	3	11
North Down & Ards	Ards	8	13	15	5	37
	North Down	6	1	5	1	4
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Castlereagh	0	0	14	6	6
	Lisburn	2	6	15	2	0
Totals		323	231	364	411	341

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54750/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Over the last ten years, my Department successfully sourced additional funding from the main EU structural programmes; Interreg IIIA, Interreg IVA and the Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) scheme. The BSP and Interreg IIIA programmes are now closed and the Interreg IVA programme will close within the next few months, to be replaced by the new Interreg VA programme.

I have placed tables in the assembly library, providing details of the lead partner organisations located in South Belfast, and also project descriptions, funded by DOE as the accountable department, under the Interreg IVA, Interreg IIIA and BSP programmes.

However, due to the strategic nature of the INTERREG and BSP projects, the lead partner organisations involved are often regional headquarters whereas the the actual projects may be based elsewhere in Northern Ireland. For example, as the Interreg IVA programme promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring regions on different sides of the border, all approved projects are cross-border in nature. Therefore, it is difficult to attribute funding to a specific geographical location.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the importance of prioritising a Walking Strategy in the next Programme for Government, in order to achieve the benefits of greater environmental awareness that could be realised through a more dedicated focus on walking.

(AQW 54769/11-16)

Mr Durkan: 'Our Great Outdoors', the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland was published in 2014 as a partnership between my Department, Sport NI, DCAL and Tourism NI. It contains a target for outdoor recreation to be recognised within the next Programme for Government.

A Walking Strategy for all of the North may sit well within this context or within individual council plans, particularly within the development of Community Planning in councils.

I encourage each of the councils to strategically consider the provision of outdoor recreation in the natural environment; the quality and connectivity of green spaces and their importance in providing opportunities for a wide range of users to enjoy and appreciate the natural environment; and to gain the multiple benefits which contact with, and exercise in, the natural environment brings for individuals and the economy.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the proposal to reduce the drink-driving limit.

(AQW 54798/11-16)

Mr Durkan: New provisions to tackle the harm caused by drink driving in Northern Ireland were included in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill that completed its passage through the NI Assembly in January 2016.

The provisions include two new lower drink drive limits, the lowest of which will apply to novice and professional drivers, together with a new graduated penalty regime. The Bill also provides for new police powers which will increase the likelihood of being stopped and tested and removes the right to opt for a blood or urine sample to replace a breath sample, in circumstances where the breath sample is marginally above the limit. It also ensures that a greater number of drink drivers will complete the drink drive rehabilitation course. The course is designed to make offenders take more responsibility for their actions and reduce the risk of them re-offending.

Collectively, these measures will create an effective deterrent and send out a very clear message to drivers that drink driving will not be tolerated and that offenders will be caught and dealt with appropriately. For this reason I want to ensure implementation of the new drink drive regime is achieved as soon as is practicable. There are, nonetheless, a number of steps to be taken before reaching that point.

A consultation on drink driving is due to issue later this month. This will contain proposals to introduce a set of five Statutory Rules that are needed to bring the new drink drive measures into operation. Other issues critical to the practical application of the new legislation include the availability of appropriate breath testing equipment, as well as a number of necessary changes within the current criminal justice system.

My Department is working closely with partner organisations in each of these areas to ensure we have robust procedural and operational systems in place in advance of such significant change. I am confident that, with the continued support of my road safety partners, the new regime will be implemented in Northern Ireland before the end of 2016.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of taxi operators who have been served with a fixed penalty notice in each of the last two years.

(AQW 54815/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The number of taxi operators and drivers served with one or more fixed penalty notices in each of the last two years is detailed in the table below:

Period	Taxi Operators	Taxi Drivers	Total Recipients
2014	139	157	296
2015	262	373	635

The figures provided have been sourced from information held by the Driver & Vehicle Agency and have not been validated as official statistics.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of river pollution incidents that have been reported in North Down, in the last three years; and the names of the polluted rivers.

(AQW 55034/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In 2013, 2014 and 2015, in the North Down area, NIEA received 58, 63 and 56 water pollution reports respectively i.e. a total of 177 reports in the inclusive period 2013 - 2015. All reports received are investigated, however, not all reports are substantiated i.e. confirmed to have had an environmental impact on a waterway.

Tables 1 to 3 below detail the number of substantiated water pollution incidents recorded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in the North Down area in each of the last 3 years i.e. those incident reports where an environmental impact was confirmed. The table also details the rivers affected and the severity of the incident.

Table 1: Water Pollution Incidents and Affected Rivers North Down – 2013.

2013 River Affected	Incident Severity			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
Crawfordsburn River	0	0	1	1
Ballyholme River	0	1	10	11
Other Unnamed Waterway	0	2	27	29

Table 2: Water Pollution Incidents and Affected Rivers North Down – 2014.

2014 River Affected	Incident Severity			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
Crawfordsburn River	0	0	2	2
Ballyholme River	0	0	6	6
Other Unnamed Waterway	0	4	21	25
Mill Burn	0	0	1	1
Millisle Lagoon	1	0	0	1

Table 3: Water Pollution Incidents and Affected Rivers North Down – 2015.

2015 River Affected	Incident Severity			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
Crawfordsburn River	0	0	0	0
Ballyholme River	0	0	4	4
Other Unnamed Waterway	0	1	20	21

The environmental impacts of water pollution incidents are classified by their 'Severity' i.e. High, Medium or Low Severity.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of people that have been prosecuted for river pollution in North Down, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55035/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In the last 3 years the number of people prosecuted is as follows:-

- 2013 - nil
- 2014 - 1 prosecution case pending, to be heard at Newtownards Magistrates Court on 15 April 2016
- 2015 - nil

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the discussions he has had with Executive colleagues on controlling the spread of Japanese Knotweed.

(AQW 55111/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As you are aware, in recognition of the problem presented by the spread of Japanese Knotweed, I tasked my officials with carrying out an analysis of the scale of the problem and outlining some options for further discussion with Executive colleagues.

An initial analysis was presented to Environment Committee on 23 Feb 2016. Whilst this analysis does outline some options, the exercise to gather information from Local Councils hasn't finalised and so there are no clear suggestions to bring to the Executive at this time.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment whether it is departmental policy to recommend that Japanese Knotweed be treated with off-the-shelf herbicide products.

(AQW 55112/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My officials receive approximately 100 queries per year in relation to Japanese knotweed. The majority of these are telephone calls from concerned members of the public regarding the implications of having Japanese Knotweed on their property and the potential costs of removal. My officials give advice on the ecology of the plant, its legal status under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, and the potential methods of removal.

The Department advises the public to contact organisations such as the Property Care Association for detailed advice on the species and its treatment. In addition the public are made aware of the range of information that is available on websites such as Invasive Species Ireland. If they choose, members of the public can eradicate it themselves, by using systemic based herbicides or any other products recommended by such organisations.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the implications of an EU exit on his Department and the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; and what preparations his Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 55115/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The policies of the EU have had a positive influence in the way in which many of my Department's responsibilities are delivered from environmental policy such as bathing waters, natural habitats and air quality to vehicle and driver safety issues.

However, it would be currently very difficult to determine the implications for those DOE activities; or those which subsequently transfer to DAERA, following an exit from the EU. This would to a large extent depend on the nature of the UK's future relationship with its ex-EU partners in such circumstances. For example if it chose to join the European Economic Area (EEA), in which case most EU environmental legislation would continue to apply, or whether it sought to negotiate its own bilateral agreements with the EU, in which case it is less clear which, if any, EU legislation would apply. To that end it is not possible to make specific preparations for alternative scenarios at this time.

The UK's relationship with the EU is a reserved matter, and UK Government policy is to support a "remain" vote in the forthcoming referendum. In line with this my Department is making no preparations for an EU exit.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact new taxi meters will have on taxi services in rural areas; and to detail what communication he has had with taxi companies regarding this issue.

(AQW 55201/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The impact that taximeters will have on taxi services in rural areas and in particular the issue of dead miles was raised by members of the Environment Committee on 7 January 2016 following concerns raised by rural operators. Given the seriousness of the issue, that people in rural communities could be adversely affected, my Department has looked further at the issue and met with rural operators, the Departmental Solicitors Office and the Consumer Council to agree a course of action.

As a result, my Department will be amending the current regulations by adding an additional exemption to regulation 10(2) of the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 which requires all Class A & B taxis to use a taximeter. This additional exemption exists when the passenger has been advised by the operator that the distance to be travelled by the taxi without the passenger in fulfilling the booking will exceed the actual distance of the passenger's journey in the taxi, and the passenger signs a waiver to that effect waiving the right to have their fare calculated by taximeter.

The rural operators are very supportive of the proposals and agreed that the steps being taken satisfactorily address the issue.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 52373/11-16, whether the transposition of the Directive 2014/52/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain private and public projects on the environment will permit his Department to continue the practice of applying both a negative Environmental Impact Assessment determination and Appropriate Assessment to the same development project.

(AQW 55211/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Departmental officials are involved in discussions with colleagues in other UK departments and work is currently underway to transpose the requirements of Directive 2014/52/EU as it relates to the planning system.

The Department will continue to meet its statutory responsibilities in relation to assessments under both Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats legislation dependent upon the particular circumstances of a development proposal.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost of cleaning up (i) river; and (ii) beach or coastal pollution in North Down, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55235/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating, under the Water (NI) Order 1999, reports of water pollution, for regulating discharges to waterways and underground strata and for initiating enforcement action where appropriate.

NIEA classify substantiated water pollution incidents by Source (where the pollution originates) and Severity (the environmental impact of the pollution) where the latter is assessed as High, Medium or Low using the 'NIEA WMU Water Pollution Incidents Severity Classification System'.

NIEA investigates all water pollution reports received from the public, our professional partners such as NI Fire and Rescue Service and other sources. A significant number of incidents are also investigated following discovery by NIEA staff whilst carrying out routine duties. In the inclusive period 2011 to 2015, NIEA has investigated 286 water pollution incidents in the North Down Constituency area. These are summarised in the table below:

Yes	Medium Severity	Low Severity	Pollution Not Confirmed	Total Incidents Investigated
2011	12	27	22	62
2012	5	29	20	54
2013	3	38	17	58
2014	4	30	21	56
2015	1	24	31	56

From a geospatial analysis, using NIEA's Geographical Information Systems, 123 of the 286 water pollution incidents investigated were within 500 metres of the coast in the North Down Constituency area.

Using average figures, the approximate costs to NIEA of investigating the incidents in the inclusive period 2011 to 2015 are set out in the table below:

Year	Total Incidents Investigated	Cost of Investigation
2011	62	£5,721/36
2012	54	£4,983.12
2013	58	£5,353.24
2014	56	£5,167.68
2015	56	£5,167.68

In respect of 'clean up' following an incident, the nature of the pollutant will determine what, if any, 'clean up' can be undertaken. For example, if oil is released into a river then oil retaining/absorbent booms can be put in place to stop the oil flowing further down the river and the oil can be removed for appropriate disposal. However, once organic pollution such as industrial effluent, sewage or agricultural effluent enters a river, unfortunately, there is very little that can be done in terms of 'clean up'. Whilst there is some scope to remove 'sewage related debris' from a waterway or the river banks following an untreated sewage discharge, again there is little that can be done once the discharged liquid fraction is in the water column.

In respect of any incident, NIEA's primary action is to stop any further pollution getting into the river, as soon as possible, once the source has been established. In cases where the polluter is identified and a 'clean up' is possible e.g. where oil has been discharged then, in line with the 'polluter pays principle', NIEA will request the 'clean up' is initiated and paid for by the person or company responsible. Where no polluter is identified, then NIEA may carry out a 'clean up' or procure an accredited company to carry it out on our behalf. If a source is not subsequently identified, then NIEA may have to bare these costs. In the period in question, NIEA has not had any significant unrecovered 'clean up' costs in the North Down Constituency area.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 51217/11-16, why his Department is permitting unauthorised sand extraction to continue from the bed of Lough Neagh Special Protection Area, given his Department's confirmation that the deemed planning application being considered as part of the enforcement proceedings does not relate to any unauthorised activity permitted to be carried out after the date of service of the enforcement notices in June 2015.

(AQW 55257/11-16)

Mr Durkan: This matter is the subject of judicial review proceedings. As such I would consider it inappropriate to comment on these matters prior to the proceedings.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of the Environment to detail who has the authority to stop taxis in order to verify they are working within the required regulations.

(AQW 55455/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 provides DVA Vehicle Examiners and the Police with the authority to stop and inspect any licensed taxi or any motor vehicle suspected of being used as a taxi.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the profile of exits submitted by each Department when the Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme commenced.

(AQW 55337/11-16)

Mr Storey (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The number of exits indicated by each department prior to the launch of the Scheme and used to inform the Scheme business case, is set out in the table overleaf. These figures (provided in full time equivalent terms), were refined as the Scheme progressed, in light of the available applicant pool and attrition rates, the pay bill savings required by each department and the need to protect business continuity.

Department	Exits Required	Department	Exits required
DARD	300	DOE	500
DCAL	52	DOJ	174
DE	65	DRD	165
DEL	394	DSD	369
DETI	41	HSENI	12
DFP	300	OFMDFM	9
DHSSPS	40	PPS	130

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for an update on the cancer awareness programme; and to detail (ii) the sources of funding; and (iii) how the funding is allocated.

(AQW 49532/11-16)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):

- (i) On 1 October 2015 the Public Health Agency (PHA) launched the latest phase of the Be Cancer Aware campaign focusing on breast cancer signs and symptoms. A new phase of the Be Cancer Aware campaign will highlight bowel cancer signs and symptoms during 2016-17. The focus will continue to be on raising awareness of cancer signs and symptoms and encouraging those with any signs or symptoms to seek help and not delay.
- (ii) The PHA has a baseline budget for Public Information Campaigns that is agreed with the DHSSPSNI on an annual basis.
- (iii) The funding allocated to the Be Cancer Aware Campaign was agreed by the DHSSPS as part of an overall Public Information Programme that was submitted by the PHA to the DHSSPS and Government Advertising Unit for 2015/16. Campaign media buying is determined on the basis of a media strategy developed and agreed by the PHA and its contracted advertising agency.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the Programme for Government 2011-16 could be reviewed and modified to better facilitate his Department.

(AQW 50444/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has worked throughout the current mandate to deliver its Programme for Government commitments. These commitments are in line with my Department's strategic priorities and include: increasing the percentage of the overall health budget being spent on public health, including measures to tackle obesity; supporting people to self manage long term conditions; improving patient and client outcomes through better access to new treatments and services; improving safeguarding outcomes for children and vulnerable adults; and reforming and modernising the delivery of health and social care services to improve the quality of patient care.

A review of the implementation of the current Programme for Government is being undertaken by OFMDFM to identify any opportunities to support more effective delivery.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many planned ministerial meetings were cancelled between the 10 September 2015 and the 20 October 2015; (ii) the intended date and attendees of each meeting; (iii) which of those meetings have since taken place; and (iv) which of those meetings have now been rescheduled for a future date.

(AQW 50500/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A number of Ministerial meetings were cancelled during this period and the subject matter was progressed through; rescheduling those meetings; holding alternative meetings with senior officials; or through correspondence. Departmental business was therefore not unduly affected.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of GP training places available for 2016; (ii) what actions his Department has taken to increase the number of places available as recommended by the Public Health Agency; (iii) what discussions he has had with the British Medical Association or the Royal College of General Practitioners to resolve issues related to the reduction in the number of GPs; and (iv) what plans he has in place to ensure any potential crisis inferred by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners is averted.

(AQW 51867/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There has not been a reduction in the number of GPs. In recognition of pressures facing the GP workforce, I recently announced investment of £1.2m per year to provide an additional 20 GP training places. This investment will bring the total number of GP training places available in Northern Ireland to 85 in 2016/17.

I have met recently with representatives from both the BMA's General Practitioners Committee and the Royal College of GPs to discuss the pressures on GP services. In October I announced the establishment of a working group to look at the issues facing GP-led primary care services. The BMA and the Royal College of GPs are represented on this group and my officials are in regular contact with representatives from both organisations to seek to address the pressures on primary care services. I have asked the group to report back to me by the end of February.

There has been significant recent investment in GP services. This year, up to an additional £15m will be invested in primary care services, including up to £300,000 to support GP development, retention and recruitment. I have also announced an initiative to provide pharmacists to work as part of the clinical team within GP practices, with the aim of improving the quality of services to patients and relieving some of the pressure on GPs. This will see additional investment of up to £2.6m in 2016/17, rising to £14m per year in 2020/21.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what part Transforming Your Care plays in his plans to reform the Health Service.

(AQW 52003/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I refer the Member to my response to AQO 8364/11-15 and my response to the Chair of the Health Committee during my session with the Health Committee on 11 November 2015.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all spend on agency and banking staff in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 52004/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Agency/Bank Spend is not collated on a monthly basis by the Department.

2014/15	BHSCT	WHSCCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	NHSCT	NIAS	Total
Agency	27,011,000	15,677,902	9,699,195	7,836,228	15,668,416	615,869	76,508,610
Bank	20,074,000	9,487,760	12,468,879	8,889,852	13,156,810	21,781	64,099,082

*Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what action he is taking to reduce avoidable child deaths.

(AQW 52005/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care bodies, the NI Fire and Rescue Service and my Department deliver a wide range of services, programmes, strategies, policies and initiatives which prevent deaths in children and young people. These include pregnancy support and perinatal care including newborn health screening; primary care provision including health visiting; secondary care; the childhood immunisations schedule, to which immunisation programmes for Meningococcal B and Meningococcal ACWY have been added this year; leaflets for first-time mothers giving advice on how to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome; social services for families; fire prevention work by NIFRS; the Home Accident Prevention Strategy; the Community Resuscitation Strategy; children's and young people's mental health services, and current interventions to prevent suicide and self harm. My Department is currently reviewing the policy guidance "Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" which provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding

children and young people. My Department is also preparing a paediatric strategy aimed at further developing community and hospital care for children. This list is not exhaustive.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what research was carried out by his Department regarding (i) domestic violence and abuse against older people, particularly older women, in respect of the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2013-2020; and (ii) the barriers to reporting domestic abuse against those receiving care in a care home setting, or within their own home.

(AQW 52011/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department utilised a wide range of existing resources and stakeholder advice to inform development of the 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' Strategy.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with Four Seasons Health Care regarding the closure of its care homes.

(AQW 52027/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials in the Health and Social Care Board have been having discussions with Four Seasons Health Care about the impact of the closures of the seven nursing homes.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service would be reducing wholetime operational cover if it were not due to budgetary pressures.

(AQW 52028/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholetime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. Any proposed changes to service delivery are subject to appropriate consultation

The redeployment of resources through the proposal to implement Day Crewing is driven purely by the need to rebalance risk across Northern Ireland.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether response times to life risk calls will increase if the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service reduces wholetime cover at weekends.

(AQW 52029/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholetime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. Any proposed changes to service delivery are subject to appropriate consultation. Public and firefighter safety remains a priority.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether there is adequate investment in nurse training to ensure patient safety and a high standard of care.

(AQW 52055/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I recognise the pivotal role that nurses play in the delivery of patient centred care within Health and Social Care and my Department invests heavily both in their pre-registration training as undergraduates and in their ongoing professional development after registration.

Approximately £36m will be invested over 2015/16 training new student nurses at local universities and in supporting training courses that provide nurses with the skills and competencies required for the delivery of safe and effective patient care.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service would be reducing wholetime operational cover if it were not for budgetary pressures.

(AQW 52076/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholetime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. Any proposed changes to service delivery are subject to appropriate consultation. Public and firefighter safety remains a priority. I am advised that the redeployment of resources through the proposal to implement a Day Crewing model is driven purely by the need to rebalance risk across Northern Ireland.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (a) confirmed cases of vCJD that were diagnosed between 1996 and 2011; and (b) suspected cases of vCJD in people currently residing locally.

(AQW 52105/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- a The Public Health Agency (PHA) has advised that less than 5 patients have been diagnosed with vCJD disease in Northern Ireland since 1996. A definitive diagnosis of vCJD requires examination of brain tissue (neuropathologically) of the affected individual, usually after post-mortem.
- b Between January and March 2015, the latest period for which information is available, there were no suspected cases of vCJD reported in Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 25303/11-15, to provide an updated answer.

(AQW 52107/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The latest available information on the number of paediatric cardiac surgery procedures carried out on children resident in Northern Ireland, in each of the last three financial years is detailed in the following table.

Year	Northern Ireland ¹	Republic of Ireland ²	England ²
1st April 2012 - 31st March 2013	58	40	34
1st April 2013 - 31st March 2014	37	13	91
1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015	25	6	116

Source:

- 1 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Information Department
- 2 Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to each Health and Social Care Trust of providing their internal day opportunities programme for adults that have learning disabilities broken down by (i) staff costs; (ii) administrative costs; and (iii) any other non pay related costs.

(AQW 52123/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The HSC Trusts have provided the following in respect of costs to provide statutory day opportunities provided internally by each Trust for adults with learning disabilities for the 2014/15 financial year.

Trust	Staff Costs (£)	Administrative Costs (£)	Other Non Pay Related Costs (£)
Belfast	5,704,832	110,013	797,983
Northern	854,379	Cannot be separated from other services	301,362
South Eastern	As the SE Trust cares for Adults with a Learning Disability in its Statutory Day Centres and makes Direct Payments on behalf of these clients, it considers that this care provision does not come within the definition of statutory day opportunities.		
Southern	772,795	7,860	159,114
Western	549,993	NIL - No Admin. staff directly employed in this area	92,567

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) his Department's response to the new medical consensus regarding the early treatment of multiple sclerosis; and (ii) the steps taken to increase access to disease modifying therapies.

(AQW 52143/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) I welcome the report published by the MS Society, "Time to Act – a consensus on early treatment" and acknowledge that early treatment is important for those diagnosed with MS. My Department will consult with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board in respect of the various recommendations contained in the report.
- (ii) Research conducted by the MS Society in 2013 found that Northern Ireland is leading the way in terms of access to some disease modifying therapies and over 1,750 people are currently on active treatment here.

As at October 2015 there were 29 patients waiting to commence treatment, with only 3 patients waiting longer than the 13 week standard and the service is therefore substantially compliant with the Department's established standard waiting time for this therapy.

Significant annual investment is made every year in MS specialist drugs for patients in Northern Ireland and the current budget for this service is in excess of £11m.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service is designated as a frontline service by his Department; and to detail what protection is given to them.

(AQW 52144/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I consider NIFRS to fall under the description of a "frontline service." The Executive decided to provide protection from reductions for frontline Health and Social Care elements of the DHSSPS budget.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the current pressures facing the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue service following cuts to their budget in 2015; and (ii) their current capacity to respond to the service need.

(AQW 52145/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) developed savings plans to meet a 5.5% reduction to its 2015/16 budget.

The NIFRS savings proposals were prioritised based on those that would minimise the impact on service delivery. The safety of the public and of firefighters remains a priority.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he is aware of any cuts that will be made to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in 2016.

(AQW 52148/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The financial planning process within my department for 2016/17 is still ongoing and therefore no decisions have yet been taken on the budget position for the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

I will not preside over unsafe services and public and firefighter safety remain a priority.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people receiving treatment for cancer broken down by (i) the constituency in which they reside; and (ii) the hospital and Health and Social Care Trust in which they receive treatment.

(AQW 52213/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on number of people receiving treatment for cancer broken down by the constituency in which they reside and the hospital and Health and Social Care Trust in which they receive treatment is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of cancer patients in Fermanagh and South Tyrone that have been referred for treatment in (i) Craigavon Area Hospital; (ii) Altnagelvin Hospital; (iii) Belfast City Hospital; (iv) the Royal Victoria Hospital; (v) the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children; and (vi) any other hospital or medical institution.

(AQW 52215/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of cancer patients in Fermanagh and South Tyrone that have been referred for treatment in either Craigavon Area Hospital, Altnagelvin Hospital, Belfast City Hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital, the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, and any other hospital or medical institution is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether he is aware of the benefits that local patients suffering from hypophosphatasia are receiving from Asfotase Alfa; and given the benefits to local patients, (ii) what communication he has had with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence regarding their continued refusal to recommend Asfotase Alfa.

(AQW 52230/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of two patients in Northern Ireland with hypophosphatasia being treated with Asfotase Alfa and of the recent news reports regarding one family's view that their daughter's condition has improved following its use.

NICE has recently issued draft guidance in respect of this drug which indicates that the Institute will not recommend its use due to the benefits being too uncertain to justify its high cost. The draft guidance is currently published for consultation and final guidance is expected in April 2016 at which time my Department will consider it for endorsement in Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether home care workers are required to be registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council; and (ii) to detail the mechanisms his Department uses to ensure that

home care workers that worked in a nursing home environment and have been struck off the register do not gain employment in the domiciliary care sector.

(AQW 52232/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The registration of domiciliary care workers and day care workers with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is currently ongoing and will be completed by March 2017.
- (ii) When the NISCC remove an individual from the Register, employers and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority are automatically informed. Under the Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland 2013 (No. 225) it is an offence to employ a person in any of the specified registered groups if they are not registered with the NISCC.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the proposals within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust consultations on the (i) the Delivery of Learning Disability Day Services for People Living in Belfast; and (ii) the Delivery of Mental Health Day Services for People Living in Belfast.

(AQW 52235/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Formal consultations on the delivery of Mental Health and Learning Disability Day Services within Belfast Trust area commenced on 3 September and closed on 10 December 2015.

The Trust is currently considering all responses and the matter will be presented to the Trust's Board in due course. I will await the recommendation from the Trust Board before reaching any final decision.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people that were registered as homeless died in hospital, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 52288/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information is not available to answer this question, as it is not possible to determine if an individual who died in hospital was registered as homeless.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average occupancy rate of each of the seven Four Seasons care homes that had been identified for closure in (i) October 2013; (ii) October 2014; and (iii) October 2015.

(AQW 52319/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department, the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and the HSC Trusts do not hold information on the occupancy rate of Four Seasons care homes.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much each Health and Social Care Trust has paid to each of the seven Four Seasons care homes that had been identified for closure in each of the last 4 years.

(AQW 52320/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The amounts paid in the last four years by each Trust to each of the seven Four Seasons care homes identified for closure are set out in the tables below.

Belfast HSC Trust

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Garvagh	–	–	–	£5,597
Oakridge	£176,784	£173,460	£118,060	£100,397
Stormont	£822,377	£848,869	£910,251	£900,314
Victoria	£487,611	£576,998	£673,144	£741,725
Antrim	–	–	–	–
Donaghcloney	–	–	–	–
Hamilton	–	–	–	–

Southern HSC Trust

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Garvagh	–	–	–	£10,043
Donaghcloney	£580,205	£592,275	£574,162	£590,377
Hamilton	£829,061	£859,415	£896,962	£949,885

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Oakridge	£210,826	£251,041	£270,376	£370,308
Stormont	–	–	–	–
Antrim	–	–	–	–
Victoria	–	–	–	–

South Eastern HSC Trust

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Antrim	£24,012	£28,679	£741	£1,245
Donaghcloney	£106,710	£50,453	£83,106	£90,885
Garvagh	–	–	–	–
Hamilton	–	–	–	–
Oakridge	£1,212,597	£1,209,033	£1,326,373	£1,287,176
Stormont	£5,229	£16,342	–	£28,469
Victoria	£117,837	£78,286	£40,695	£1,458

Western HSC Trust

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Antrim	–	–	–	–
Donaghcloney	–	–	£20,679	£22,457
Garvagh	£18,288	£59,786	£76,815	£94,708
Hamilton	–	–	–	–
Oakridge	–	–	–	–
Stormont	–	–	–	–
Victoria	–	–	–	–

Northern HSC Trust

Home	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Antrim	£1,031,874	£950,220	£829,251	£875,921
Donaghcloney	–	–	–	–
Garvagh	£1,008,835	£989,055	£988,237	£867,902
Hamilton	£28,077	£14,378	–	–
Oakridge	–	£466	£18,788	£18,862
Stormont	–	–	–	–
Victoria	£13,988	£2,381	–	–

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total expenditure on newspapers, periodicals and magazines by his Department in each of the last four years.

(AQW 52352/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department's total expenditure on newspapers, magazines and periodicals in each of the last 4 years for which information is available is shown in the table below.

Year	Expenditure
2011/12	£17,647
2012/13	£15,867

Year	Expenditure
2013/14	£15,785
2014/15	£12,307

Departmental expenditure was incurred through orders processed by the DHSSPS Library, which has centralised responsibility for the Department's newspapers, magazines and periodicals, and the figures provided are for the most recent 4 financial years for which these are available.

Expenditure in this area is kept under continuous review, and reductions have been made in the number of periodicals procured by the Department over the last number of years.

The specialist press is a key source of information for the Department in view of the specialised nature of much of its business, and the importance of keeping abreast of professional developments.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many incidents of medical records being lost or breached have been recorded in each of the last four years.

(AQW 52353/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Recorded incidents of medical records being lost or breached in each of the last four years are as follows:

- 2012 - 73
- 2013 - 96
- 2014 - 108
- 2015 - 69

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of people with diabetes broken down by Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) how many are currently enrolled in a specialist chronic condition self-management programme.

(AQW 52379/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Diabetes is one of the disease registers in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), the purpose of which is to reward General Medical Services contractors for the provision of quality care. Further information on the QOF can be found at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/quality-and-outcomes-framework-qof-statistics-annual-report>, whilst all available QOF data can be accessed on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's website at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/qof-achievement-data>.

In relation to diabetes, the contractor establishes and maintains a register of all patients aged 17 or over with diabetes mellitus, which specifies the type of diabetes where a diagnosis has been confirmed. The total number of people on the diabetes register in Northern Ireland, at 31st March 2015, was 84,836. This data is collected at LCG level, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Number of people on the QOF diabetes register in Northern Ireland, 31st March 2015

LCG	Number of people on the QOF diabetes register, at 31st March 2015
Belfast	18,786
South Eastern	14,536
Northern	21,749
Southern	16,016
Western	13,749
Northern Ireland	84,836

Source: Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF)

- (ii) Information on the number of people with diabetes who are currently enrolled in a specialist chronic condition self-management programme is not available. Information on structured patient education programmes delivered in Northern Ireland by both statutory and third sector providers is collected by my Department on an annual basis. The most recent summary report for structured patient education programmes was published in March 2015 and provides information on structured patient education programmes delivered during 2013/14. The report can be accessed via the DHSSPS website at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/pesmp-ltc-ni-13-14.pdf>.

A total of 318 condition specific structured patient education programmes for Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes were delivered in 2013/14, with 2,738 participants.

An exercise is currently being undertaken by my Department to collect information for patient education programmes delivered in 2014/15.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to Adult Autism Assessments in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, to detail the (i) average waiting time for an assessment; (ii) assessment time required for each patient; and (iii) whether targets for assessment processing times are being met.
(AQW 52428/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The average waiting time for an Adult Autism Assessment within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area is 19 months.
- (ii) Assessment is based on individual circumstance and need however a straightforward assessment will take on average take 3-4 months. There are times that this will take longer due to other complexities and/or co-morbid factors.
- (iii) Child and family support is not predicated on a diagnosis. Each Trust, as part of its triaging process at referral stage, is required to provide families with information about how to access family support services including community paediatrics, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, psychology and child and adolescent mental health services, social services or educational psychology.
- (iv) There are no targets set for Adult ASD services.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much of the money provided to each Health and Social Care Trust was allocated directly to providers of day opportunities in each of the last three years.
(AQW 52492/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not held in either a consistent or comparable manner across Northern Ireland, and therefore it is unable to be answered.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the proportion of resources in each Health and Social Care Trust that are allocated to (i) the providers of day opportunities; (ii) staff costs; and (iii) administrative costs.
(AQW 52493/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not held in either a consistent or comparable manner across Northern Ireland, and therefore it is unable to be answered.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the value by which local day opportunity service providers are resourced after administration, staff and other costs are subtracted.
(AQW 52494/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not held in either a consistent or comparable manner across Northern Ireland, and therefore it is unable to be answered.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether responses to the Public Health Agency's Lifeline consultation will be analysed independent of (i) officials that commission the service; (ii) people that manage the performance reporting relationship with the Lifeline service provider contract; (iii) people that devised the proposed consultation options; (iv) people that will advise the Public Health Agency Board; and (v) people that managed this consultation process.
(AQW 52511/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Effective analysis of the consultation responses on the proposed new Lifeline service requires detailed knowledge of the existing service including the standards it is required to meet. Public Health Agency staff who manage both the Lifeline service contract and the consultation process on a new service are involved in the analysis of the consultation responses and in the development of the consultation report. This report will be considered by the Board of the Agency and submitted to the Department.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the time allocation of home carers for care in the community; and whether this will increase in light of the new minimum home visit standards being applied by Health Trusts in England and Wales.
(AQW 52548/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There is no set time allocation for homecare visits. The duration of homecare visits are based on an assessment by HSC Trusts of the individual's needs and circumstances and will vary for each individual. In November 2015 the HSC Board published a regional review of domiciliary care which makes a number of recommendations to underpin the domiciliary care service. In addition, my Department is undertaking the Reform of Adult Care and Support to identify the long term strategic direction for care and support services, including domiciliary care.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of times that the Retained Duty System appliances failed to mobilise in Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue stations in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Portrush; (iii) Portstewart; (iv) Ballymoney; (v) Ballycastle; and (vi) Limavady in each of the last two years.

(AQW 52564/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details the number of times the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) Retained Duty System appliances failed to mobilise in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Portrush; (iii) Portstewart; (iv) Ballymoney; (v) Ballycastle; and (vi) Limavady, in each of the last 2 years.

Station	Number of occasions when Appliances failed to Respond	
	2014	2015
Coleraine (RDS)	12	11
Portstewart	7	3
Portrush	3	6
Ballymoney	15	11
Ballycastle	5	2
Limavady	15	16

NIFRS' Regional Control Centre continually monitors Retained availability. Where there is inadequate Retained availability which may result in a failure to respond, crews are mobilised immediately from neighbouring Stations.

Mrs Dobson asked at have been prescribed (i) anti-anxiety; and (ii) anti-depressant drugs in each of the last three years, broken down by (a) Health and Social Care Trust; and (b) the age of the patient; and to include (c) any associated costs.

(AQW 52569/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression can often effectively be managed through psychological therapies, sometimes known as talking therapies, rather than medication and a range of services are currently provided, including Psychology, Psychotherapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Trauma Therapy. Also in responding to the increasing demand for psychological therapies the HSC Board is currently establishing Primary Care Talking Therapy Hubs in each Trust locality for treatment of common mental health needs. These Hubs will provide a wide range of low intensity talking therapies (Counselling, Interpersonal Therapy, etc.) and lifestyle coaching and offer a real alternative to drug therapy.

The number of people in receipt of (i) anti-anxiety and (ii) anti-depressant drugs in each of the last three years, broken down by age band and Health and Social Care Trust are shown in Tables 1a, b and c and Tables 3a, b and c overleaf.

The net ingredient cost of anti-anxiety and anti-depressant items, by age band and Trust, in each of the last three years, are shown in Tables 2a, b and c and Tables 4a, b and c overleaf.

Table 1a: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2012-13 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	29	81	61	52	37	0
15 to 19	178	364	210	213	183	163
20-29	1,341	2,352	1,629	1,583	1,440	1,255
30-39	1,883	4,161	2,775	2,613	2,425	1,768
40-49	2,760	6,017	3,934	3,975	3,488	2,462
50-59	2,588	5,494	3,735	3,750	3,400	2,290
60-69	2,000	4,768	3,421	3,105	2,787	1,770
70-79	1,397	3,518	2,275	2,244	1,767	1,407
80-89	675	1,839	1,291	1,182	968	858
over 89	106	366	251	218	164	162
Total	12,957	28,960	19,582	18,935	16,659	12,135

Table 1b: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2013-14 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	29	69	60	46	34	0
15 to 19	198	338	229	213	212	21
20-29	1,365	2,484	1,666	1,555	1,481	602
30-39	1,961	4,280	2,782	2,595	2,505	1,572
40-49	2,723	6,074	3,859	3,929	3,429	1,932
50-59	2,751	5,752	3,820	3,737	3,387	2,319
60-69	1,992	4,839	3,419	3,141	2,739	1,719
70-79	1,415	3,635	2,425	2,340	1,815	1,344
80-89	714	1,876	1,346	1,110	961	827
over 89	124	391	267	202	201	159
Total	13,272	29,738	19,873	18,868	16,764	10,495

Table 1c: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2014-15 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	21	70	55	44	42	0
15 to 19	164	392	260	222	222	115
20-29	1,383	2,593	1,639	1,485	1,496	1,164
30-39	1,978	4,257	2,825	2,577	2,458	1,791
40-49	2,602	6,191	3,842	3,835	3,459	2,305
50-59	2,751	5,995	3,955	3,811	3,453	2,376
60-69	1,989	4,873	3,332	3,105	2,736	1,676
70-79	1,414	3,817	2,455	2,340	1,877	1,327
80-89	687	1,939	1,343	1,224	992	753
over 89	122	418	251	198	189	162
Total	13,111	30,545	19,957	18,841	16,924	11,669

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Table 2a: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2012-13 by Age Band and Trust^{3,5}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£882	£1,792	£1,082	£816	£1,093	£-
15 to 19	£4,465	£4,107	£1,525	£1,379	£1,633	£2,719
20-29	£16,069	£22,126	£10,801	£12,661	£18,313	£10,562
30-39	£31,928	£58,729	£25,158	£29,606	£46,005	£20,115
40-49	£48,525	£103,623	£41,152	£52,127	£75,970	£33,708
50-59	£52,093	£82,950	£48,332	£58,627	£89,829	£31,943
60-69	£36,165	£72,706	£45,349	£47,413	£62,848	£24,581
70-79	£16,129	£45,863	£23,699	£30,076	£31,247	£15,613
80-89	£7,641	£29,024	£16,349	£20,420	£16,088	£10,130
over 89	£1,514	£6,714	£5,320	£3,610	£3,359	£2,089
Total	£215,410	£427,635	£218,768	£256,735	£346,386	£151,461

Table 2b: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2013-14 by Age Band and Trust^{3,6}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£1,462	£1,546	£1,702	£1,129	£1,779	£0
15 to 19	£2,564	£3,434	£1,805	£1,210	£1,307	£506
20-29	£11,259	£23,196	£11,458	£11,379	£15,084	£6,466
30-39	£27,584	£55,142	£22,942	£25,907	£39,028	£13,611
40-49	£41,153	£87,932	£38,270	£45,236	£61,338	£23,473
50-59	£45,114	£80,646	£46,202	£52,293	£69,643	£29,707
60-69	£35,009	£65,303	£39,764	£44,472	£51,704	£21,096
70-79	£14,904	£43,986	£25,504	£30,014	£27,886	£15,163
80-89	£6,852	£26,680	£20,265	£18,398	£16,837	£9,319
over 89	£1,655	£6,903	£6,182	£3,294	£2,198	£3,510
Total	£187,555	£394,768	£214,093	£233,331	£286,804	£122,851

Table 2c: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Anti-Anxiety² Items 2014-15 by Age Band and Trust^{3,7}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£1,085	£1,903	£2,115	£823	£1,526	-
15 to 19	£1,954	£3,852	£1,953	£1,058	£1,397	£845
20-29	£11,081	£24,774	£10,942	£12,069	£15,796	£8,957
30-39	£25,462	£56,551	£23,158	£22,304	£38,244	£16,560
40-49	£37,180	£88,558	£35,425	£40,644	£60,446	£27,972
50-59	£44,131	£84,725	£44,940	£55,758	£65,693	£29,331
60-69	£33,250	£68,694	£38,794	£45,948	£49,473	£20,253
70-79	£19,232	£47,388	£24,736	£30,610	£28,388	£18,837
80-89	£7,429	£30,096	£17,166	£16,852	£16,320	£10,710
over 89	£1,128	£8,851	£4,384	£3,597	£2,278	£2,032
Total	£181,933	£415,393	£203,613	£229,662	£279,562	£135,497

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Table 3a: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Antidepressant² Items 2012-13 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	88	111	70	77	51	77
15 to 19	675	1,111	817	781	682	569
20-29	4,197	6,206	4,774	4,920	4,181	3,206
30-39	5,098	10,113	7,284	7,943	6,663	4,256
40-49	7,378	14,856	10,787	11,827	9,816	5,781
50-59	7,217	13,624	10,486	11,024	9,714	5,612
60-69	4,882	10,380	8,205	8,297	7,048	3,689
70-79	2,815	6,523	4,642	4,980	3,461	2,572
80-89	1,317	3,379	2,505	2,470	1,665	1,685
over 89	204	591	467	388	267	266
Total	33,871	66,894	50,037	52,707	43,548	27,713

Table 3b: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Antidepressant² Items 2013-14 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	88	106	103	101	57	69
15 to 19	710	1,180	879	886	719	593
20-29	4,257	6,415	4,875	5,019	4,402	3,143
30-39	5,290	10,164	7,683	7,981	6,796	4,162
40-49	7,426	15,232	11,281	12,166	10,264	5,742
50-59	7,783	14,425	11,296	11,688	10,315	5,805
60-69	5,085	10,928	8,702	8,696	7,601	3,662
70-79	3,049	7,127	5,256	5,438	3,952	2,694
80-89	1,377	3,518	2,715	2,599	1,789	1,703
over 89	235	626	533	398	294	298
Total	35,300	69,721	53,323	54,972	46,189	27,871

Table 3c: Count of Registered Patients¹ in Receipt of Antidepressant² Items 2014-15 by Age Band and Trust³

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	86	119	125	102	62	57
15 to 19	749	1,338	982	1,015	856	581
20-29	4,500	6,843	5,216	5,192	4,689	3,255
30-39	5,633	10,361	7,979	8,081	6,998	4,300
40-49	7,419	15,727	11,503	12,439	10,561	5,690
50-59	8,300	15,399	11,988	12,446	10,975	6,161
60-69	5,251	11,371	9,087	8,837	8,008	3,798
70-79	3,225	7,552	5,613	5,787	4,289	2,730
80-89	1,433	3,640	2,819	2,672	1,949	1,731
over 89	245	658	524	418	293	289
Total	36,841	73,008	55,836	56,989	48,680	28,592

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Table 4a: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Antidepressant² Items 2012-13 by Age Band and Trust^{3,8}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£1,815	£1,762	£1,315	£1,866	£693	£1,246
15 to 19	£11,125	£15,686	£10,845	£12,365	£9,395	£11,715
20-29	£89,545	£163,988	£108,157	£121,782	£92,821	£69,198
30-39	£195,790	£425,598	£267,035	£321,203	£241,668	£153,610
40-49	£335,439	£824,334	£495,723	£609,412	£423,370	£261,038
50-59	£344,485	£742,075	£484,063	£580,158	£417,954	£248,279
60-69	£205,246	£532,802	£356,376	£403,175	£296,659	£157,261
70-79	£96,318	£278,649	£179,207	£183,525	£119,652	£93,047
80-89	£41,183	£126,186	£99,262	£85,114	£54,531	£54,176
over 89	£5,536	£21,652	£17,662	£11,840	£10,223	£7,640
Total	£1,326,482	£3,132,731	£2,019,646	£2,330,439	£1,666,968	£1,057,211

Table 4b: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Antidepressant² Items 2013-14 by Age Band and Trust^{3,9}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£2,715	£2,525	£2,133	£1,831	£993	£1,766
15 to 19	£15,680	£21,168	£14,832	£15,774	£11,570	£12,331
20-29	£115,476	£194,443	£124,436	£131,368	£118,574	£90,558
30-39	£221,168	£478,783	£316,647	£343,630	£296,137	£172,061
40-49	£382,707	£928,429	£571,751	£700,762	£537,554	£292,122
50-59	£412,479	£866,730	£580,765	£706,435	£558,250	£296,990
60-69	£252,516	£629,521	£415,843	£476,141	£380,368	£172,442
70-79	£121,170	£336,617	£229,851	£245,668	£161,752	£109,855
80-89	£48,767	£145,804	£121,239	£106,962	£70,841	£56,306
over 89	£6,723	£22,255	£24,583	£14,686	£15,011	£11,440
Total	£1,579,401	£3,626,278	£2,402,079	£2,743,257	£2,151,050	£1,215,871

Table 4c: Net Ingredient Cost⁴ of Antidepressant² Items 2014-15 by Age Band and Trust^{3,10}

Age Bands	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Unassigned
Under 15	£1,479	£2,605	£1,606	£1,723	£1,075	£1,189
15 to 19	£10,163	£15,979	£14,012	£10,678	£9,339	£7,493
20-29	£90,509	£147,196	£111,309	£106,073	£93,417	£69,054
30-39	£181,367	£366,772	£271,267	£294,546	£237,395	£151,709
40-49	£337,880	£761,120	£517,207	£622,573	£447,811	£258,178
50-59	£385,340	£771,977	£561,739	£679,001	£503,943	£288,451
60-69	£227,446	£549,138	£380,570	£434,661	£320,396	£164,767
70-79	£110,797	£299,919	£224,733	£230,431	£140,700	£102,397
80-89	£41,694	£127,155	£108,154	£88,286	£60,830	£48,323
over 89	£5,466	£19,287	£22,175	£13,478	£11,667	£10,991
Total	£1,392,141	£3,061,148	£2,212,772	£2,481,451	£1,826,573	£1,102,550

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Notes

- Registered patients refers to those individuals registered with a GP Practice
- Antidepressant items are those listed under BNF 4.3; Anti-anxiety items are those listed under BNF 4.1.2
- Trust area is determined by the postcode of the patient at the end of each financial year. Where Trust is unassigned the patient postcode is either missing or is not valid.
- Net Ingredient Cost is the cost of the prescribed medicines after discounts applied by the BSO. Expenditure figures exclude dispensing related fees paid to pharmacy contractors
- Total Costs for 2012/13 excludes £1.56 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location
- Total Costs for 2013/14 excludes £1.52 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location
- Total Costs for 2014/15 excludes £1.71 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location
- Total Costs for 2012/13 excludes 1.56 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location
- Total Costs for 2013/14 excludes 1.52 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location
- Total Costs for 2014/15 excludes 1.71 Million of expenditure that could not be allocated by Age and/or Location

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) any discussions he has had with the Emergency College of Midwifery; and (ii) whether he has met with midwives in the Belfast Health and Social Trust regarding the work pressures they are experiencing.

(AQW 52574/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I met with Breedagh Hughes of the Royal College of Midwives on 14 January 2016 to discuss the work, campaigns and priorities of the Royal College of Midwives in N. Ireland.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the increase in the number of cases being dealt with by the GP Out Of Hours service in Daisy Hill Hospital over the Christmas period, what action is being taken to ensure that this service is adequately staffed and resourced.

(AQW 52639/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board has worked closely with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) to seek to address these challenges that it has been experiencing, which are to a large degree due to increasing difficulty in the recruitment and retention of GPs to cover OOH shifts, particularly at weekends and holidays. Actions taken include the introduction of nurse triage, nurse practitioner and pharmacist input to support GPs in managing the service; on-going recruitment for GPs; the introduction of flexible working arrangements; enhanced premia for difficult to fill OOH shifts and additional funding to boost capacity at busy times. To reduce the impact of workforce gaps, the SHSCT has also established a link with Dalriada Urgent Care (DUC) to support call triage. As part of the 2015/16 GMS contract settlement, funding has been provided to all OOH providers to cover the majority of increased GP indemnity costs.

Senior Departmental officials have considered the particular issues facing the Southern Trust with the Trust's Interim Chief Executive and senior HSCB representatives. It has been agreed that a peer review of OOH services in the Southern Trust will be taken forward, led by Dalriada Urgent Care. The review, which will commence shortly, will develop recommendations, including actions necessary to support the OOH service.

To consider the regional issues facing OOH services, the Department has established a working group to examine the current delivery of GP Out of Hours services across Northern Ireland and to identify good practice and opportunities to improve service provision within existing resources. The review group, which includes representation from the OOH service providers, the HSCB and Northern Ireland NI General Practitioners Committee, will make recommendations for improving service provision over the medium to longer term.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to cut student bursaries for nursing students.

(AQW 52710/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As I have made clear already, I have no plans to cut bursaries for student nurses.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of sick absence by nurses, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52713/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Figures for 2013/14 and 2014/15 were sourced from the new Human Resources, Payroll, Travel & Subsistence system and relate to a new calculation based on percentage of hours lost. This means that sickness absence information relating to the last two years is not comparable to previous years.

Sick absence rates for the Nursing & Midwifery staff group (including nurse support) are provided in the table below.

Year**	BHSCT	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCCT
2013/14	7.02%	8.36%	7.28%	6.42%	7.77%
2014/15	7.94%	9.50%	7.21%	6.49%	8.54%

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to update adoption legislation.

(AQW 52785/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A draft Adoption and Children Bill has been developed, Executive approval would be required to consult on such a Bill.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 48471/11-16, (i) for an update on a new service specification for the community meals service within the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) to detail how this will impact on current arrangements for this service.

(AQW 52845/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust's Community Meals Steering Group continues to work towards finalising a specification for the provision of a community meals service. It will continue to engage with service users on the development of the service specification and subsequent service delivery model. The existing community meals service will operate in its current format until any new service model is agreed.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to 50232/11-16, for an update on the regional review of Domiciliary Care by the Health and Social Care Board.
(AQW 52847/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board have carried out a regional review of Domiciliary Care and published the Report 'A Managed Change; An Agenda for Creating a Sustainable Basis for Domiciliary Care in Northern Ireland' in November 2015. This Report can be found at: <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/publications/index.html>

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the new suicide prevention strategy.
(AQW 52881/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The new Protect Life suicide prevention strategy is at an advanced stage of drafting. An early draft was shared with stakeholders and the comments received are informing a revised version which will issue for consultation in the coming months.

The new strategy will reflect international evidence of best practice in suicide prevention as well as learning from local experience of delivering suicide and self harm prevention services. The new strategy will continue to focus on reducing the difference in suicide rates between the most deprived and least deprived areas.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to improve cervical screening rates amongst women in the 25-29 and 60-64 age groups.
(AQW 53541/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department and the Public Health Agency (PHA) promote the uptake of cervical screening in a range of ways including local media releases, social media and activities at key times of the year, such as during Cervical Cancer Prevention Week in January and Cervical Screening Awareness week in June.

In 2014/15 a focus group study commissioned by the PHA found that the most commonly cited reason for younger women not attending cervical screening was embarrassment. In response the PHA commissioned the development of a video, aimed at young women invited for cervical screening for the first time. The video explains the screening process and seeks to provide reassurance to women on some of the issues which they may feel anxious about. The video is available on the cancer screening website and has been used by the PHA to promote the programme via social media. The video has also been shared with primary care and practices have been encouraged to link to it from their own websites. The video is also available in signed and subtitled versions.

The PHA has awarded a 3 year contract to the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) to deliver a service to promote informed choice in cancer screening across Northern Ireland. This project trains peer facilitators to deliver education sessions on the three cancer screening programmes to community groups, targeted at those less likely to participate in screening. This will incorporate delivery of cervical screening sessions to groups of women aged over 50 years.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of domiciliary care packages currently delivered in (a) North Down; and (b) in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area.
(AQW 53805/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At the 31st December 2015 there were 6,332 clients in the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in receipt of domiciliary care. Of these, 2,993 were located in the North Down and Ards sector.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has considered co-operating with the Republic of Ireland in providing autism diagnosis services.
(AQW 53997/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My department presently has no plans to develop joint autism diagnostic services with the Republic of Ireland

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the steps he has taken to ensure local health services are not operating 0845 numbers.
(AQW 54427/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In March 2013 my Department amended the 2004 General Medical Services Contract Regulations to include a requirement that practices entering into, renewing or extending a contract for telephone services must satisfy themselves that people will not pay any more to contact the practice than an equivalent call to a geographic number.

In relation to HSC Trusts, there are only three 0845 numbers currently in use. In two cases the lines are in the process of being phased out and alternative local rate numbers are already in place. In relation to the remaining line, this is used primarily by health professionals making referrals to other services and calls are charged at a local rate. Consideration is being given to its future use.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will provide an option for parents to purchase the Meningitis B vaccine on private prescription, but have it administered by their Health Service GP or practice nurse. (AQW 54873/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is up to individual Practices to decide if they will write a private prescription and administer the Men B vaccine privately. Contractually it is not possible for Practices to charge for the prescription or the administration of the vaccine to a patient who is registered with the practice.

I do not propose to make any changes to the current arrangements operating in individual Practices in relation to the private administration of the Men B vaccine.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of his current budget has been spent on treating people with Alzheimer's disease. (AQW 54908/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not hold this information centrally. Treating people with Alzheimer's cuts across primary, secondary and community care and so it would be extremely difficult to accurately cost this.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration he has given to ringfencing the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme rebates paid to Northern Ireland in order to fund access to medicines for local patients, as is done through the New Medicines Fund in Scotland. (AQW 54909/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Rebates from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme are paid by the Department of Health to the Health and Social Care Board and are used to offset the growth in expenditure on branded medicines, which will include new and innovative medicines.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the community health initiatives the Public Health Agency has funded in North Down in each of the last five years. (AQW 54999/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency commissions a wide range of community health services across Northern Ireland. The majority of programmes are funded at Trust – wide level. In respect of North Down, services are delivered in the South Eastern HSC Trust area across a number of health and wellbeing programmes as follows –

- Tobacco/Smoking
- Physical Activity /Obesity Prevention
- Mental Health Promotion
- Suicide Prevention/Protect Life
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Sexual Health
- Accident Prevention
- Cancer – awareness and prevention
- Older people

Other initiatives include:

Education:

- Service supporting adults and young people to re-engage with education

Sustainable communities

- Services supporting groups wishing to develop horticultural projects
- Food Banks – support to financially vulnerable families and individuals
- Warm Packs – support to individuals, families with children and older people

North Down specific services:

- Support services to vulnerable parents and children
- Assessing and meeting the needs of North Down communities to improve their health and social wellbeing

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's guidelines on the imposition of do not resuscitate orders. (AQW 55022/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Advance Care Planning (ACP) can support more effective communication, decision making and care planning between clinicians and patients through focusing on a person's wishes and preferences for their care, particularly as they approach the end of their life. Advance Care Planning may include decisions around resuscitation.

Each Health and Social Care Trust currently has its own policy for making and recording Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions. Work is ongoing to develop a regional operational policy on DNACPR for use in both community and hospital settings and across organisations.

A booklet 'Your life and your choices: plan ahead (Northern Ireland)' has been developed by the Public Health Agency and Macmillan Cancer Support to help provide the public with information on Advance Care Planning and can be accessed at <http://be.macmillan.org.uk/be/p-21065-your-life-and-your-choices-plan-ahead-northern-ireland.aspx> Safety on the Foyle Bridge

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on plans to action the technical options identified in Public Health Agency surveys to improve safety on the Foyle Bridge.

(AQW 55153/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The technical options report, completed in 2011, concluded that the only viable safety option, in respect of suicide prevention, was to raise the barriers on the bridge. The cost of this work was estimated to be in the region of £4m to 5m, but would require additional technical testing to determine whether the bridge could support the extra weight. The Department for Regional Development agreed that the additional technical exploratory work was necessary but advised that it was not in a position to fund this work.

The Public Health Agency, which had funded the initial testing, was also not in a position to commission further testing as this would have required taking investment away from other suicide prevention activity.

Since then, the Public Health Agency has been working with a range of agencies to consider options to promote a positive image of the river as a place of health and social wellbeing. This approach entails using technology, culture, arts, and recreation to change public perception of the river, its banks and bridges – thereby reducing their association with suicide.

Department of Justice

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Justice to detail the implications of an EU exit on his Department; and what preparations his Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 54919/11-16)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): An exit from the EU would have an impact on both criminal and civil justice matters. It is likely that it would make cross border investigations and enforcement proceedings more lengthy and costly to pursue. However, the precise implications are not yet known and would, ultimately, depend on any arrangements that may be agreed with the EU during any exit negotiations. My Department has started a dialogue with stakeholders to identify the potential impact on issues including justice cooperation, border control and the movement of assets.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice how much funding is being provided to the community and voluntary sector in terms of (i) grants; (ii) grants-in-aid; and (iii) procurement in the 2015-16 financial year, including any projected spend.

(AQW 55096/11-16)

Mr Ford: The funding my Department, including its Agencies but not its arm's-length bodies, has provided to the community and voluntary sector in terms of (i) grants; (ii) grants-in-aid; and (iii) procurement in the 2015-16 financial year is shown in the table below:

	£k			
	Grants	Grants-in-Aid	Procurement	Total
Community and Voluntary Sector Funding	3,022	2,002	877	5,901

Further to the response provided on 29 February 2016 to AQW 54247/11-16, these figures represent the most up to date forecast of expenditure for 2015-16.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many terrorist attacks there have been on prison officers, outside prisons, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55166/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is not in a position to attribute attacks on prison staff outside prisons to terrorist organisations. The responsibility for identifying perpetrators in any attack lies with the Police Service.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of full time equivalent agency staff employed by (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies in each week since June 2015, broken down by grade.

(AQW 55208/11-16)

Mr Ford: The number of full time equivalent agency staff employed by my Department, including its Agencies and Arm's Length Bodies is set out in the table below.

Please note that this information is collected on a monthly basis only.

The number of full time equivalent agency staff employed

Date	Grade								Total
	AA	AO	EOII	EOI	SO	DP	G7	Non - General Service	
1ST June 2015	0	14.6	3.5	1	9	2	0	6	36.1
1st July 2015	0	14.41	3.5	1	10	2	0	6	36.91
1st August 2015	0	16.53	3	1	9	2	1	14	46.53
1st September 2015	0	15.31	2	3	6.5	2	1	16.61	46.42
1st October 2015	0	17.70	3	3	10.5	0	1	19.61	54.81
1st November 2015	0	15.10	3	3	13.5	0	1	18.61	54.21
1st December 2015	0	21	3.54	3	14.5	0	1	21	64.04
1st January 2016	1	22.5	2	2	12.5	0	1	20.61	61.61
1st February 2016	1	19.8	3	3	13.5	1	1	21.01	63.31
1st March 2016	1	20.3	3	3	11.5	1	2	22.40	64.2

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) full time; and (ii) part time staff in (a) his Department; and (b) each of its arm's-length bodies who have availed of each tranche of the voluntary exit scheme, broken down by grade.

(AQW 55209/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Voluntary Exit Scheme launched in March 2015 covered NICS permanent employees including those on secondment to other organisations. Staff employed by Departmental arm's-length bodies were not eligible to apply.

A breakdown of Department of Justice staff that availed of the scheme, by grade and working pattern, is provided below.

Table A: Tranche 1

Analogous Grade	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Prison Grades	YJA Grades	Total by Working Pattern
Full Time Working Pattern	1	1	2	5	5	3	2	4	6	0	22	51
Part Time Working Pattern	0	0	1	1	6	2	1	9	3	0	2	25

Table B: Tranche 2

Analogous Grade	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Prison Grades	YJA Grades	Total by Working Pattern
Full Time Working Pattern	0	0	1	4	4	6	4	4	2	4	20	49
Part Time Working Pattern	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	4	1	1	4	17

Table C: Tranche 3

Analogous Grade	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Prison Grades	YJA Grades	Total by Working Pattern
Full Time Working Pattern	0	0	3	5	6	3	12	15	8	7	4	63
Part Time Working Pattern	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	14	6	4	0	32

Table D: Tranche 4

Analogous Grade	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Prison Grades	YJA Grades	Total by Working Pattern
Full Time Working Pattern	1	0	2	11	5	1	2	8	0	38	1	69
Part Time Working Pattern	0	0	0	3	2	3	2	6	0	0	0	16

Table E: Tranche 5

Analogous Grade	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Prison Grades	YJA Grades	Total by Working Pattern
Full Time Working Pattern	0	0	0	4	9	2	1	0	0	3	0	19
Part Time Working Pattern	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	8

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions resulting from the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act.

(AQW 55220/11-16)

Mr Ford: From its introduction in January 2015, until the end of February 2016, (the most recent point at which data is available), there have been no convictions for offences under the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Within that period, however, two defendants were received into the Magistrates' Court on charges relating to section 4 of the Act, committing offence with intent to commit offence under section 1 or 2.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total value of assets seized in each of the last five years; and for a breakdown of the distribution of the Asset Recovery Community Scheme.

(AQW 55448/11-16)

Mr Ford: From 1 April 2011 my Department has been able to access 100% of Northern Ireland criminal confiscation receipts. 50% of the money received is returned to the law enforcement organisations involved, the remainder is allocated to the Assets Recovery Community Scheme (ARCS).

In the last five years the amounts received into the ARCS scheme total:

- 2011/12 - £1.50m
- 2012/13 - £1.08m
- 2013/14 - £0.77m
- 2014/15 - £1.59m
- 2015/16 - £0.72m (year to date)

Allocations under the scheme are detailed on the Department of Justice website at: <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/publications/asset-recovery-community-schemes>

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Justice what involvement his Department has in the location of memorials to members of the security forces that have been murdered.

(AQO 9859/11-16)

Mr Ford: My Department has no involvement in the location of such memorials.

My Department provides funding to the PSNI and the RUC GC Foundation. Both organisations maintain memorials to police colleagues who lost their lives, but the location of those memorials is entirely a matter for the organisations in question.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions about the recent collapse of the prosecution case relating to the 1998 Omagh bombing.

(AQO 9860/11-16)

Mr Ford: I meet regularly with the Director and I last met with him on 9 March at a planned meeting. We do not discuss ongoing cases but I am always happy to hear any issues arising from cases that he wants to share with me.

I appreciate that the outcome of this prosecution is a further blow for the families affected by this atrocity. They have campaigned with dignity for many years. I note that the investigation into the Omagh bomb remains a live case and would urge anyone with any information that may assist the police investigation to come forward.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Justice for how many peace lines in North Belfast is his Department responsible.

(AQO 9861/11-16)

Mr Ford: My Department leads on the delivery of the TBUC headline action and the Programme for Government commitment in respect of the removal of peace walls.

At the outset of our work on the Programme for Government commitment, the Department was responsible for 59 structures situated in Belfast, Portadown, Lurgan and Londonderry. There are currently 51 structures of which 17 are in North Belfast.

Since devolution we have removed three structures from North Belfast, including the road barriers at Newington Street and Brucevale Park. We have also removed parts of two other structures at Duncairn Gardens and Longlands Avenue, and have opened the gate in Alexandra Park.

The reduction in the number of structures has only been possible through effective partnership working between Departments, statutory agencies, the International Fund for Ireland and the voluntary and community sector.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions about the collapse of the Omagh bomb case.

(AQO 9862/11-16)

Mr Ford: I meet regularly with the Director and I last met with him on 9 March at a planned meeting. We do not discuss ongoing cases but I am always happy to hear any issues arising from cases that he wants to share with me.

I appreciate that the outcome of this prosecution is a further blow for the families affected by this atrocity. They have campaigned with dignity for many years. I note that the investigation into the Omagh bomb remains a live case and would urge anyone with any information that may assist the police investigation to come forward.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to outline the impact that the funding of sport and leisure facilities at Magilligan Prison has had on prisoner welfare and wellbeing.

(AQO 9863/11-16)

Mr Ford: Despite a reduction in spend there has been no impact on the provision of gym facilities at Magilligan Prison.

A timetable is in place to maximise attendance and a number of additional activities are also available, for example Gym Instructor awards, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and Rambling (for suitably selected prisoners).

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Justice to outline the lessons learnt by the Prison Service following the failure of a prisoner to return to Hydebank Wood on 11 February 2016.

(AQO 9864/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service takes appropriate and robust action to prevent students failing to return from Unaccompanied Temporary Release.

Students who apply for Unaccompanied Temporary Release undergo a thorough risk assessment to ascertain whether they are suitable. Part of this assessment looks at factors which help Governors come to a view on whether applicants are likely to adhere to the terms of their temporary release. These factors include the likelihood of re-offending; the nature of the offence(s) for which the student is currently serving a sentence; an assessment of behaviour in custody; the length of time a student has still to serve; the record of behaviour during any previous periods of home leave; and whether they are likely to return to prison by the appointed time. Only those who are determined as presenting a low risk across these various factors will be granted Unaccompanied Temporary Release.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a progressive process in place from Accompanied Temporary Release to Unaccompanied Temporary Release leading to Home leave.

As a result of the incident on 11 February 2016, Governors at Hydebank Wood are in the process of implementing a new protocol with all placement providers regarding immediate contact with the Prisoner Development Unit Manager or Hydebank Duty Manager, if the student has not arrived at their agreed starting time.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had any discussions with the Secretary of State on the use of public interest immunity certificates.
(AQO 9865/11-16)

Mr Ford: I have not had any discussion with the Secretary of State on this matter.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) number of; and (ii) revenue generated by parking fines in (a) Bangor; (b) Holywood; (c) Donaghadee; and (d) the rest of North Down, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 54169/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): The table below contains statistics on the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued within the last five calendar years for each of the towns listed (a-c). There are no cumulative figures available of the remainder of North Down (d).

Please note, because off-street car parks transferred to the new Councils on 1 April 2015, PCN details for 2015 have been separated accordingly within the table.

My Department does not maintain revenue figures for parking fines by location; however, based on the total number of PCNs issued across Northern Ireland for the same period, I can confirm that the rates of payment of fines were as follows:

- Approximately 67% of PCNs were paid at £45
- Approximately 7% of PCNs were paid at £90
- Approximately 3% of PCNs were paid at £135
- Of the remaining 23%:
 - Approximately 18% of PCNs issued are challenged. The success rate of challenges to PCNs is approx 60%. The main reason for challenges being successful is because drivers subsequently produce supporting evidence such as a pay & display ticket that fell from the window or upon production of a valid Blue badge.
 - Approximately 5% of PCNs are, at any one time, in various stages of debt recovery action.

Main towns within Ards and North Down Borough Council area	2011 PCNs	2012 PCNs	2013 PCNs	2014 PCNs	2015 PCNs		
					On-street only	Off-street (pre transfer to Councils) 1/1 to 31/3/2015	Off-street (post transfer to Councils) 1/4 to 31/12/2015
Bangor	3,287	3,708	3,528	3,292	1404	298	949
Holywood	1,691	1,191	735	826	239	106	277
Donaghadee	226	159	105	48	32	0	0

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many traffic calming measures have been deployed in each district council area over the last three years; and what budget was (i) allocated; and (ii) spent on traffic calming measures in each district council area over the last three years.
(AQW 54280/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Please see the tables attached which detail the number of traffic calming schemes, along with the allocation and spend, in Council areas over the last three years.

TransportNI Southern Division

Council Area	Financial Year	Number of Schemes	Allocation £k	Spend £k
Ards	2013/14	0	0	0
Armagh	2013/14	2	8	8
Banbridge	2013/14	1	13	13

Council Area	Financial Year	Number of Schemes	Allocation £k	Spend £k
Craigavon	2013/14	0	0	0
Down	2013/14	1	9	9
Newry & Mourne	2013/14	0	0	0
North Down	2013/14	0	0	0
Ards	2014/15	2	19	19
Armagh	2014/15	1	11	11
Banbridge	2014/15	0	0	0
Craigavon	2014/15	1	47	47
Down	2014/15	0	0	0
Newry & Mourne	2014/15	0	0	0
North Down	2014/15	0	0	0
Ards	2015/16	1	6	6
Armagh	2015/16	1	6	6
Banbridge	2015/16	1	33	33
Craigavon	2015/16	0	0	0
Down	2015/16	0	0	0
Newry & Mourne	2015/16	1	5	5
North Down	2015/16	1	13	13

TransportNI Western Division

Council Area	Financial Year	Number of Schemes	Allocation £k	Spend £k
Omagh	2013/14	1	20	19
Fermanagh	2013/14	2	14	10
Strabane	2013/14	2	27	30
Cookstown	2013/14	2	10	10
Magherafelt	2013/14	2	10	0
Dungannon	2013/14	2	20	20
Derry	2013/14	1	40	34
Omagh	2014/15	1	30	30
Fermanagh	2014/15	2	35	29
Strabane	2014/15	2	34	34
Cookstown	2014/15	2	23	23
Magherafelt	2014/15	2	16	16
Dungannon	2014/15	1	20	11
Derry	2014/15	4	41	52
Mid Ulster	2015/16	2	35	23
Fermanagh and Omagh	2015/16	4	17	17
Derry City and Strabane	2015/16	2	40	28

TransportNI Eastern Division

Council Area	Financial Year	Number of Schemes	Allocation £k	Spend £k
Belfast	2013/14	3	195 in total for all areas	38
Lisburn	2013/14	4		79.4
Castlereagh	2013/14	1		18.1
North Down	2013/14	0		0
Newtownabbey	2013/14	1		22.2
Carrickfergus	2013/14	2		37.3
Belfast	2014/15	4	76 for both areas	21
Lisburn & Castlereagh	2014/15	9		55
Belfast	2015/16	2	40 for both areas	23.3
Lisburn & Castlereagh	2015/16	4		16.7

TransportNI Northern Division

Council Area	Financial Year	Number of Schemes	Allocation £k	Spend £k
Antrim	2013/14	1	10	13.4
Ballymena	2013/14	1	10	10
Ballymoney	2013/14	0	0	0
Coleraine	2013/14	1	2	2
Larne	2013/14	1	5	5
Limavady	2013/14	3	5	5
Moyle	2013/14	0	0	0
Antrim	2014/15	2	35	35
Ballymena	2014/15	0	0	0
Ballymoney	2014/15	0	0	0
Coleraine	2014/15	0	0	0
Larne	2014/15	1	10	10
Limavady	2014/15	1	15	15
Moyle	2014/15	1	16	16
Causeway Coast & Glens	2015/16	4	9.5	9.5
Mid & East Antrim	2015/16	3	35	35
Antrim & Newtownabbey	2015/16	0	0	0

* In addition to the spend in 2013/14, £23k was spent on replacement / upgraded signage at six Primary Schools in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Area.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. (AQW 54606/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My response to your previous question (AQW 53804/11-16 refers) indicated that my Department sourced a total of £98.57m of EU funding; all of which is matched. It is not possible to provide a total of expenditure disaggregated to a constituency level. An overarching premise of competitive EU funding is that the beneficial impacts of receiving said are evidenced in regional, national and EU added-value terms. Many of the projects identified within AQW 53804/11-16 such as the extended Bus Replacement project, the Enterprise service upgrading projects and the Belfast (Great Victoria Street) Intermodal Transport Hub study project have delivered wide ranging benefits both locally and regionally.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to a speed restriction along Ballinlea Road in the vicinity of the junction with Bregagh Road, Ballymoney.

(AQW 54705/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Ballinlea Road in the vicinity of the Bregagh Road junction has become an increasingly popular tourist location due to the presence of 'The Dark Hedges'.

There have been increasing numbers of visitors to the rural site both by private car and tour coaches which has led to a number of issues being raised with my Department, mainly related to traffic and pedestrian management in the vicinity of the roads around 'The Dark Hedges'.

My officials are currently involved in discussions with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, The Dark Hedges Preservation Trust, and other interested stakeholders regarding a number of matters including traffic and pedestrian management in the vicinity of Ballinlea Road/Begagh Road junction close by The Dark Hedges.

The aim of these ongoing discussions is to bring forward a package of proposals encompassing the responsibilities of all the stakeholders, including my Department that will address the issues in an all-inclusive way.

I trust you will find the above information helpful.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps have been taken, and will be taken, to bring to an end to the verge erosion at Bregagh Road, Ballymoney.

(AQW 54706/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department's TransportNI is cognisant of the verge erosion issue at Bregagh Road, Ballymoney. My officials, have in the past, undertaken remedial works to mitigate the verge erosion. Unfortunately, to date, these have been unsuccessful due to tourist and agricultural vehicles overriding the repairs.

The rural nature of the road, combined with its cultural importance as a tourist destination, necessitate that road markings and furniture be kept to a minimum so as to ensure that the visual impact of the Bregagh Road is not compromised. As a consequence, my Department remains reluctant to implement any substantial physical engineering measures to manage the verges.

My Department recognises that resolving not only the verge deterioration issue, but also the accompanying traffic congestion, whilst retaining the ambience and visual appeal, requires the collaboration of a wider body of stakeholders, including Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and the Dark Hedges Preservation Society amongst others.

To that end my officials will continue to liaise with the various stakeholders, with the aim of not only managing our road infrastructure assets, but also ensuring the heritage of the Bregagh Road is retained.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development by how much has the width of the Bregagh Road, Ballymoney been increased in recent years by verge erosion and resurfacing works.

(AQW 54708/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Due to the rural nature of the Bregagh Road, its width is not uniform along the entirety of its length. The road width varies from approximately 4.2m, at its narrowest cross-section, to approximately 5.0m at the recently resurfaced section, at the junction with Ballinlea Road. I am therefore unable, at this time, to provide an exact figure for how much the width of the Bregagh Road has increased in recent years as a consequence of verge erosion and resurfacing works.

However, as you are aware, there is a recurring problem with verge erosion on the Bregagh Road. This is an unfortunate effect of its ever increasing popularity as a tourist destination, and causes additional complications for my Department when undertaking structural maintenance or resurfacing works. Whilst my Department attempts to retain the status-quo and minimise alterations to the road cross-section during works this is not always possible.

The ongoing verge deterioration and lack of kerbing on Bregagh Road inevitably results in the spread of newly placed surfacing beyond the limits of the existing carriageway. When combined with, the often necessary, side filling to strengthen the carriageway, can result in the surfaced width being, notionally, increased beyond the existing carriageway footprint.

Please be assured that, not only is my Department aware of the importance of the Bregagh Road as a tourist destination, but, it is also fully committed to protecting and maintaining our cultural heritage. With this aim my officials continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Bregagh Road is appropriately maintained using the resources we have available.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in securing a safe pedestrian route along Ballinlea Road from car parking facilities to the Dark Hedges.

(AQW 54709/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I am very aware of this location at Ballinlea Road in the vicinity of the Bregagh Road junction which has become an increasingly popular tourist location due to the presence of 'The Dark Hedges'.

There have been increasing numbers of visitors to the rural site both by private car and tour coaches. I am aware that there are no parking facilities other than a lay-by at one end of the site and off-site parking at The Hedges Hotel and Gracehill Golf Club which are located a short distance away on the Ballinlea Road, but not linked by a footway. This has led to a number

of issues being raised with my Department, mainly related to traffic and pedestrian management in the vicinity of the roads around 'The Dark Hedges'.

My officials are currently involved in discussions with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and other interested stakeholders regarding a number of matters including traffic and pedestrian management in the vicinity of Ballinlea Road/Begagh Road junction close to The Dark Hedges.

The aim of these ongoing discussions is to bring forward a package of proposals encompassing the responsibilities of all the stakeholders, including my Department, that will address the issues in an all-inclusive way.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development when construction work will begin on the bypass at Dungiven, following the announced outcomes of the public enquiry for the A6.

(AQW 54711/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The indicative allocations for the 2017/18 – 2020/21 period will fund construction of part of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme. My Department is currently considering the extent of the scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, which could be delivered. It is envisaged that priority will be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

Subject to making the Statutory Orders, approval of the final Business Case and successful procurement, it is possible the first phase of Londonderry to Dungiven scheme could commence in 2018/19.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the funding which is available for the Dungiven bypass as part of the A6 scheme.

(AQW 54712/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The December 2015 Budget Statement contained a major flagship project to upgrade the A6 linking Belfast and Londonderry. Two major roads projects are planned to improve the A6, the Randalstown to Castledawson and Londonderry to Dungiven dual carriageway schemes.

The 2016/17 allocation will allow the A6 Randalstown to Castledawson scheme to commence in late summer/autumn 2016, subject to approval of the final business case. Work is ongoing finalising the detailed design, but the current estimate for this scheme is in the range £120m to £140m.

The indicative allocation for the A6 flagship project in the Budget Statement is £258m over the 2016/17 – 2020/21 period, thus approximately £130m is available for the Londonderry to Dungiven scheme. Work is currently underway to determine the extent of this scheme, including a Dungiven bypass, which can be delivered within this indicative funding allocation. It is envisaged that priority shall be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the management agreement between NI Water and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, whether consent is required for the felling of trees; and if so, whether NI Water or Infrastrata sought out and obtained the necessary consent in advance of the works carried out on 22 February 2016.

(AQW 54738/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The works at Woodburn Forest are being taken forward within a planning legislative framework, for which the Department of Environment (DOE) has responsibility, and the requirement for a felling licence under the Forestry Act 2010 does not apply.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what additional pathway provision has been provided for cyclists in North Down in the last twelve months; and what is planned for the next twelve months.

(AQW 54765/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Within the last twelve months my Department has completed works on a new shared cycle/foot-way on the Gransha Road, Bangor. This was completed during January 2016. The scheme, approx 1km in length, connects the recent signalisation of Gransha Roundabout to the existing cycle facilities on the Balloo Road.

More recently my Department has commenced a cycle way scheme on the A2 East Circular Road (from Donaghadee Roundabout to Gransha Roundabout). Works are estimated to be completed in early April 2016 which will provide a new 1.4km segregated cycle/foot-way.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her Department has considered the development of a Greenway for Carryduff.

(AQW 54774/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I am very keen to promote the development of greenways and to assist Councils to do so. In order to achieve this, my Department is drawing up a Strategic Plan for Greenways with the aim of facilitating the development of an integrated network of greenways across Northern Ireland. The plan will provide a framework to assist Councils and other bodies to develop their own local schemes as parts of a network for the whole region.

Traditionally, greenways are developed along rivers and the routes of dismantled railways and disused canals. For this reason, Carryduff has not featured in any of my Department's considerations to date.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her 2016-17 budget is adequate for road maintenance and pothole repair.

(AQW 54782/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department's resource budget which is used to deliver the day-to-day maintenance activities, such as patching and grass cutting, is once again under pressure as indeed are resource budgets across all Departments.

The Department's budgets for 2016/17 are currently being prioritised between the main spending areas and until this exercise is completed, I am not in a position to define the levels of routine maintenance services that my Department will be in a position to deliver.

Whilst there are significant pressures on resource budgets, I will endeavor to provide the best service possible within budgetary envelopes.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether she will discuss with Sustrans the extent of usage of the cycle network in the last twelve months.

(AQW 54811/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I have had a number of discussions with Sustrans in relation to cycling issues since I took up office in October 2015 and my officials have regular discussions on an ongoing basis. On 21st October 2015 I launched the first Belfast Bike Life report – a survey on cycling (including usage) in Belfast during 2015 which was conducted by Sustrans in association with my Department. The report is available at:

http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/bike_life_belfast_2015.pdf

I am keen to continue discussions on these issues with all stakeholders.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development for her assessment of the roads infrastructure; and whether potential exists for the regeneration of strategic sites, including vacant school sites, in Omagh town centre.

(AQW 54837/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The roads infrastructure in and around Omagh Town Centre is similar to most market towns across the province. During the morning and evening peak traffic times, most of the junctions and through roads around the town centre experience some congestion.

Proposals to regenerate potential vacant schools sites will require a planning application detailing the proposed uses and resultant impact to the existing highway network. Depending on the nature and scale of any proposal a Transport Assessment may be required to demonstrate the impacts on the highway network and if any mitigation is required.

Should any of the existing school sites around Omagh town centre become vacant and proposals for regeneration be brought forward then, my Department's officials will be available to give appropriate advice based upon the proposals being presented at the time.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to painting white lines at access roads to prevent them being blocked by parked cars.

(AQW 54838/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: A white marking with end bars (sometimes referred to as an 'i-bar') can be used to indicate part of the carriageway to be kept free of parked vehicles, either outside an entrance to off-street properties, or across a dropped kerb facility provided for pedestrians.

The marking is not however legally enforceable so it is only used sparingly in order to help discourage parking.

If there is a problem with a particular entrance being blocked the driver could be deemed to be causing an obstruction which is a matter that the Police Service of Northern Ireland can deal with.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all roadworks to be carried out in South Belfast in (a) 2015-16; and (b) 2016-17.

(AQW 54888/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The following works, have been or will be taking place in South Belfast:

(a) 2015 - 16

Road resurfacing at the following locations:

- Finaghy Road South (Erinvale Avenue to Benmore Drive).
- Glenmachan Street.

- Malone Road (Piney Hills to Broomhill Close).
- Vidor Gardens (scheme commenced in 2014/15).
- Ramore Park (scheme commenced in 2014/15).

(b) 2016 - 17

As the 2016/17 structural maintenance budgets have not yet been finalised it is not possible to provide a resurfacing programme for the incoming year at this stage.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development what action her Department has taken to alleviate flooding at the junction between Finaghy Road South and the Upper Malone Road.

(AQW 54889/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has not been made aware of a flooding issue at this location. However, I have instructed my officials to undertake an investigation of the road drainage in this area and take appropriate action to resolve this issue.

NI Water also advised it is not aware of a flooding issue relating to its infrastructure at this junction and has no record of any previous complaints relating to this location.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the implications of an EU exit on her Department and the new Department for Infrastructure; and what preparations her Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 54920/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The ongoing preparations in establishing the Department for Infrastructure are entirely focused upon the efficient delivery of services for the people of Northern Ireland and are not predicated on our membership of the European Union. I am confident that, regardless of the referendum vote, these services will continue to be delivered.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the current traffic volumes in both directions on the proposed route of the new A5 road project.

(AQW 54928/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Average daily traffic flows (Monday to Friday) taken from surveys carried out along the A5 route during 2015 were as follows:

■ A5 Victoria Road between Newbuildings and Magheramason	14,400
■ A5 Victoria Road between Bready and Ballymagorry	12,400
■ A5 between Newtownstewart and Omagh	12,500
■ A5 between Omagh and Ballygawley	14,000

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what costings have been carried out for the dualling of the A6 Derry to Dungiven road (i) at Dungiven; (ii) from Derrychrier to Claudy; (iii) from Claudy to Drumahoe; and (iv) from Drumahoe to Maydown.

(AQW 54937/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The indicative allocations for the 2017/18 – 2020/21 period will allow my Department to construct elements of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme.

Work is currently underway to determine the extent of this scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, which can be delivered within this indicative funding allocation. It is envisaged that priority shall be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

The estimated cost of the scheme is in the range £390m - £420m, including a bypass of Dungiven. Following my recent decision to proceed, these figures will be reviewed in greater detail as the scheme progresses to procurement.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the amount allocated from her 2016-17 budget for road maintenance and pothole repair in North Down.

(AQW 54945/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: While the overall resource budget for my Department has been agreed internal allocations to Transport NI Divisions have still to be finalised. Once the Divisional allocations have been confirmed I will write to you to advise of the funding allocated for road maintenance and pothole repair in North Down.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed roundabout scheme for the Craigtanlet hills area of North Down.

(AQW 54968/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: As you will be aware, this scheme would have a significant impact on the local environment. Consequently my officials initiated a pre-application enquiry with colleagues from the Planning Department of Ards and North Down Council, to determine whether the proposed layout will be acceptable.

When I have considered the comments from the pre-application enquiry, I will make a decision on the most appropriate way forward. Delivery of any scheme will then be subject to the availability of the necessary land and funding.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development when NI Water decided to demolish the pumping house at Banagher Glen, Dungiven; and what consultation was undertaken.

(AQW 54989/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The old filter building at Banagher Glen has not been operational since 1968, when the then new water treatment plant at Caugh Hill was commissioned. The building was decommissioned and, over a period of time, the roof had started to collapse. During high winds sheets of tin, used to secure the building, were being blown across the dam access road. Therefore, in April 2015, following an inspection, the decision was taken to demolish the building in the interests of public safety. NI Water appointed Lowry's Building and Civil Engineering Co. Ltd to carry out the demolition work, which commenced on 19 January 2016.

Prior to the demolition NI Water required approvals from DOE Planning Service and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), as the building is in an area of special scientific interest. However, as the old filter house was not a listed building and construction work was not involved, Planning Service had no comments to make. NIEA required an ecological study to be carried out in support of a Habitat Regulatory Assessment. This was completed and approval was received from NIEA to proceed with the demolition.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria in the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16) for (i) Basic Loss Payments; and (ii) Occupier Loss Payments.

(AQW 54990/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen:

- (i) Basic Loss Payment is a compensation payment payable to a person, in addition to the market value of the land or property which has been acquired compulsorily, where that person has a qualifying interest. The Basic Loss Payment is calculated on a percentage of the market value, and is subject to a minimum and maximum amount. The criteria for Basic Loss Payment are detailed in Clause 1 of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill.
- (ii) Occupier's Loss Payment is a compensation payment payable to a person who has a qualifying interest in land both agricultural and non agricultural which has been acquired compulsorily, in respect of his loss from the use of that land. Occupier's Loss Payment is calculated on a percentage of the value of his interest and is subject to a minimum and maximum amount. The criteria for Occupier's Loss Payment in respect of both agricultural and non agricultural land are detailed in Clause 2 of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill.
- (iii) In both cases, where a Home Loss Payment also arises, the amount of additional compensation takes into account any payment made in respect of Home Loss.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54995/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department sourced a total of £98.57m of EU funding over the last ten years; all of which is matched. The attached table sets out details of all funding secured by year, project and funding source for the last 10 years. I have also placed this information in the Assembly Library. It is not possible to provide a total of expenditure disaggregated to a constituency level. An overarching premise of competitive EU funding is that the beneficial impacts of receiving said are evidenced in regional, national and EU added-value terms.

Department for Regional Development European Funding sourced from 2007 (£)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Grand Total
DETI European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme							5,800,000.00	10,735,500.00	7,185,000.00		23,720,500.00
A2 Upgrade -Belfast Shore Road to Greenisland								5,485,500.00			5,485,500.00
A2 Upgrade -Belfast Shore Road to Greenisland Extension									3,450,000.00		3,450,000.00
Extended Bus Replacement Project								5,250,000.00			5,250,000.00
Optares and Goldlines									3,735,000.00		3,735,000.00
Replacement of Goldline & Metro Fleet							5,800,000.00				5,800,000.00
FP7 Research and Development - People Programme				177,247.23							177,247.23
Advanced Technologies for Water Resource Management (ATWARM)				177,247.23							177,247.23
INTERREG IVA			2,591,969.50		424,334.00		2,400,000.00	10,276,822.00			15,695,125.50
ANSWER (Agricultural Need for Sustainable Willow Effluent Recycling)					424,334.00						424,334.00
Cross Border Rural Infrastructure Development Schemes (CBRIDS) -Upgrade to Culmore Roundabout & Project Extension			2,518,419.00								2,518,419.00
Drogheda Viaduct								3,168,072.00			3,168,072.00
Enterprise Phase 3 Overhaul Programme -Stage 2								7,110,750.00			7,110,750.00
Redevelopment of Portadown Railway Station							2,400,000.00				2,400,000.00
Small Ferries Project			73,550.50								73,550.50
INTERREG IVB (AA)			-								284,000.00
BATTERIE Project											284,000.00
START			-								-

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Grand Total
INTERREG IVB (NWE)				568,194.00							568,194.00
The Sustainable Stations Project - Antrim Integrated Transport Centre				568,194.00							568,194.00
TEN-T		13,460,203.67	1,408,254.00	3,312,045.79		2,440,505.83	15,724,594.80		2,860,472.67	18,917,874.86	58,123,951.62
Ballymena - Derry: Track Life Extension			1,408,254.00								1,408,254.00
Belfast Inter-modal Transport Hub									2,860,472.67		2,860,472.67
Bottleneck Alleviation and Cross Border Connectivity Works Knockmore to Lurgan										7,576,200.15	7,576,200.15
Coleraine to Londonderry Track Relay Phase 1						1,309,005.95					1,309,005.95
Dualling of A1 Beech Hill to Cloghogue		12,958,808.40									12,958,808.40
Dualling of A6 Derry to Dungiven '				1,141,222.75							1,141,222.75
Dualling of A8 Belfast to Larne - Colemans Corner - Bally Rickard Road (Study)				1,933,994.50							1,933,994.50
Dualling of the A8 Coleman's Corner to Ballyrickard Roundabout							15,724,594.80				15,724,594.80
EASYWAY I		501,395.27									501,395.27
EASYWAY II				236,828.54							236,828.54
Installation of rapid charge points for electric vehicles and a supporting IT system						110,232.08					110,232.08
Technical Equipment and Infrastructure Upgrade: Londonderry to Coleraine Rail Line										11,341,674.70	11,341,674.70
York Street Interchange - Improvement to Belfast Port Hinterland Connections (Scheme Development Studies)						1,021,267.80					1,021,267.80
Grand Total	0.00	13,460,203.67	4,000,223.50	4,057,487.02	424,334.00	2,724,505.83	23,924,594.80	21,014,322.00	10,045,472.67	18,917,874.86	98,569,018.35

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her Department plans to improve the structure of the Ardrea bridge over the Ballinderry River on the Littlebridge Road, Moneymore, to enable heavy vehicles to resume travelling on this road.

(AQW 55048/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Ardrea Bridge is a large reinforced concrete structure which is over 80 years old and consists of 5 spans with a total length of 30 metres. A recent structural assessment has recommended that the weight of vehicles using the bridge should be restricted to 7.5 tonnes as the bridge is not up to current loading standards.

Options to either strengthen or replace the bridge are currently being investigated and the timing of any solution will depend on the conclusions of this investigation. However given the nature and scale of the problems with Ardrea Bridge, it is very unlikely that it will be possible to enable heavy vehicles to resume using this bridge in the short term.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Regional Development what action was taken to remedy any structural problems with the Ardrea bridge over the Ballinderry River on the Littlebridge Road, Moneymore following a survey on the bridge structure eighteen years ago.

(AQW 55049/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Following the initial survey work carried out during the 1990s, Ardrea Bridge has since been the subject of regular inspections along with further investigation and structural analysis. This work has enabled the condition and performance of the bridge to be monitored and clarification provided to a number of assumptions contained within the original assessment work.

Updates in the assessment standards and refinements to the computer structural analysis has led to the identification of a potential increase in the assessed load carrying capacity of the bridge. However in a recent visual structural inspection of the bridge a number of elements were identified as displaying signs of distress and consequently my Department has been forced to introduce a 7.5 tonne weight restriction to minimise further damage and in the interests of public safety.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the reasons for her Department's 7 ½ Tonne weight restrictions on the Ardrea bridge over the Ballinderry River on the Littlebridge Road, Moneymore.

(AQW 55050/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Ardrea bridge is over 80 years old and has a total length of 30 metres. A recent structural assessment has recommended that the weight of vehicles using the bridge should be restricted as the bridge is not up to current loading standards.

To avoid overloading of the bridge and in the interests of public safety, a 7.5 tonne weight restriction has been imposed while strengthening or bridge replacement plans are developed. This is in keeping with the conclusions of the structural assessment report. While the majority of vehicles will be able to continue to use the bridge unaffected, heavier vehicles will however have to take alternative routes. Additional signage will be erected to assist drivers that will need to use these routes.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development how much of the A6 Randalstown to Castledawson dualling scheme will be along the existing route; and how much will be offline.

(AQW 55077/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: 1.9 miles (3.1km) of the A6 Randalstown and Castledawson dualling scheme will follow the existing route with the remaining 7.1 miles (11.6km) being offline.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development to list the Dungiven bypass partial routes presented at the public inquiry; and which of these routes her Department has been asked to review.

(AQW 55079/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: A Public Inquiry for the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme was held in 2012 and the Inspector produced a report embracing various recommendations, one of which was to examine an alternative route for the Dungiven bypass.

The review of the alternative route has been completed and a report has been prepared addressing the recommendations arising from the Public Inquiry.

I have attached links to both the Inspectors Report and the Departmental Statement for the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven scheme which are available on my Departments website. I would refer you to Page 17 of the Departmental Statement where you will find information regarding the examination of the alternative route for Dungiven Bypass.

- <https://www.drndi.gov.uk/articles/a6-londonderry-dungiven-inspectors-report-decision-and-confirmed-orders>
- <https://www.drndi.gov.uk/publications/a6-londonderry-dungiven-departmental-statement>

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development whether consideration has been given to further development of Park and Ride schemes at Dungiven and Claudy.

(AQW 55080/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I understand you are aware of the proposed new Park & Ride site at Magherabuoy, Dungiven which is included within the proposals for the A6 Dungiven – Londonderry dualling project. The construction of the Park & Ride site requires some alterations to the existing A6 carriageway that will be provided as part of the overall project and therefore would be best delivered within the bypass scheme rather than in advance of it.

It is hoped that construction of the Park & Ride would be completed early in the scheme, providing approximately 100 spaces. Plans are also included for a 41-space Park & Ride site at the Baranait Road junction near Claudy

The indicative allocations for the 2017/18 – 2020/21 period will allow my Department to construct elements of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme.

Work is currently underway to determine the extent of this scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, which can be delivered within this indicative funding allocation. It is envisaged that priority shall be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the estimated completion date for the Dungiven bypass; and how it has changed over the last five years.

(AQW 55081/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: In the last five years there has been limited funding available to progress work on the A6, however, the indicative allocations for the 2017/18 – 2020/21 period, set out in the Budget Statement will fund construction of part of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme.

My Department is currently considering the extent of the scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, which could be delivered with the indicative funding. Once this has been established a timescale for the work can be determined. It is envisaged that priority will be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

Subject to making the statutory orders, approval of the final business case and successful procurement, it is possible that the first phase of the Londonderry to Dungiven scheme could commence in the latter part of 2018/19.

Mr Diver asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding her Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55091/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department sourced a total of £98.57m of EU funding over the last ten years; all of which is matched. The attached table sets out details of all funding secured by year, project and funding source for the last 10 years. I have also placed this information in the Assembly Library. It is not possible to provide a total of expenditure disaggregated to a constituency level. An overarching premise of competitive EU funding is that the beneficial impacts of receiving said are evidenced in regional, national and EU added-value terms.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the costs, including consultancy costs, for the rebranding of Roads Service to Transport NI.

(AQW 55097/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: No expenditure has been directly incurred for the rebrand of Roads Service to TransportNI, and there has been no consultancy costs incurred.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the average cost of repairing a pothole.

(AQW 55098/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Unfortunately my Department is unable to provide the average cost of repairing a pothole. The cost for repairing potholes falls within the TransportNI budget for “patching”. This term is applied to small scale works necessary to keep roads in a satisfactory state of repair, including infilling potholes and repair of small areas affected by cracking or settlement.

Any information that could be provided would relate to the repair of carriageway surface defects which while including potholes would also include areas of cracking, depressions and other faults.

As the materials, specifications, quantities and methods used vary from location to location there is no single method or technique used in the repair of surface defects and as such it is not possible to provide a single unit cost.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Translink requires a licence to operate a service from Ballymartin Park and Ride to Belfast International Airport; and whether it has applied for this licence.

(AQW 55108/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I can advise you that Translink does not require licences for the routes which it operates. Its current network provision and any potential future amendments to it are covered by the remit of the Service Agreement it entered into with my Department in October 2015.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development at what age passengers must pay an adult fare when using a Translink bus; and whether there has been any assessment of the cost of allowing 16-18 year olds to benefit from the concessionary fare.

(AQW 55158/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Customers can avail of child concessionary bus and rail fares (50% discount) up until 30th June after the child's 16th birthday.

There has been no assessment of the costs of allowing 16-18 year olds to benefit from concessionary travel.

Currently, there is no provision within the concessionary fares budget to support any further extension of the Scheme. However, should the Executive offer increased resources in any future budget, there may be scope to extend the Scheme to other passenger groups.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will discuss, with the Minister for Regional Development, any plans to replace mature trees that are felled during the construction of the Belfast Rapid Transit system.

(AQO 9809/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: This question has been transferred to my Department from the Department of Environment.

In developing the detailed designs for the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) system, my Department has endeavoured to minimise the impact on existing trees and only remove them where absolutely necessary.

It is my Department's intention that, when the BRT works are complete, there will be a greater number of trees along the entire BRT route than there were before the works began.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development what assurances she can give that means testing for concessionary fares, including the Senior Citizen Smart Pass, will not be introduced; and that concessionary fares will be protected as a priority.

(AQW 55194/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I have no plans to introduce means testing for concessionary fares and can assure you that the Executive and I are committed to supporting, through the concessionary fares scheme, the elderly and other vulnerable groups within society.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her Department has explored a policy of concessionary public transport fares for young people who are deaf, as is the case in England and Wales; and whether any assessment has been made of the cost of introducing such a policy.

(AQW 55195/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The last review of the Concessionary Fares Scheme was carried out in 2007 when the Executive extended the Scheme to include people aged 60 – 64. This review however did not specifically explore or assess cost implications of introducing a concessionary fares policy for young people who are deaf.

There is currently no provision within the concessionary fares budget to support any further extension of the Scheme. However, should the Executive offer increased resources in any future budget, consideration could be given to improving the range of concessions provided, including to the hearing impaired.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development whether it is her intention to simultaneously commence phase 1a and phase 1b of the A5 western transport corridor.

(AQW 55226/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: In its Budget 2016/17 the Executive made allocations for a single year, however, the nature of some capital projects means it is important to provide certainty over a longer time span. The Executive therefore agreed a commitment to the seven Flagship projects, including the A5, with funding allocated between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Subject to the successful completion of statutory procedures the funding profile for the A5WTC would permit the New Buildings to north of Strabane section (Phase 1a) to commence construction in 2017 with an estimated completion date of 2019. It would also suggest that the South of Omagh to Ballygawley section of the scheme (Phase 1b) could commence in the latter part of the five-year budget period.

Further work is however required in conjunction with DFP to clarify this phase, which would require a commitment to a significant residual expenditure in the subsequent budget period.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what Transport NI is doing to improve road safety on Largy Road, Portglenone.

(AQW 55227/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The B52 Largy Road, Portglenone has benefited from considerable investment over recent years to improve road safety. This investment included a Network Development scheme, costing over £215k which was recently

completed at the Ballybollen Road / Taylorstown Road junction. The scheme delivered improved sightlines, right turning lanes into the minor roads as well as approximately 150m of additional footway.

Other enhanced traffic management measures aimed at improving road safety have also been installed on the road including junction warning signs with high visibility backing boards, speed reactive signs at Kilnock Crossroads, flashing school warning signs and a 40mph speed limit have been implemented through the development at Rocks Hill. Road markings have also been enhanced along the route, along with the provision of red patches and 'slow' markings, edge lines and hatching at strategic points.

A number of Minor Works schemes have been identified as part of a route study and these have been assessed and prioritised for inclusion in a future programme subject to availability of finance and necessary land.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether she has any plans introduce free bus and rail transport for the hearing impaired.

(AQW 55228/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: There is currently no provision within the concessionary fares budget to support any further extension of the Scheme at present. However, should the Executive offer increased resources in any future budget, consideration could be given to improving the range of concessions provided, including to the hearing impaired.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Regional Development when the Omagh to Ballygally section of the A5 will begin and how much it will cost.

(AQW 55240/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: In its Budget 2016/17 the Executive made allocations for a single year, however, the nature of some capital projects means it is important to provide certainty over a longer time span. The Executive therefore agreed a commitment to the seven Flagship projects, including the A5, with funding allocated between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Subject to the successful completion of statutory procedures the funding profile for the A5WTC would permit the New Buildings to north of Strabane section to commence construction in 2017 with an estimated completion date of 2019. It would also suggest that the South of Omagh to Ballygawley section of the scheme could commence in the latter part of the five-year budget period.

Further work is however required in conjunction with DFP to clarify this phase, which would require a commitment to a significant residual expenditure in the subsequent budget period.

At current prices, the Omagh to Ballygawley phase of the scheme is estimated in the region of £225 million.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration her Department has given to restricting heavy goods vehicles travelling through Clady in West Tyrone.

(AQW 55241/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Proposals are currently being developed for a weight restriction scheme in Hillsborough. Following the outcome of this public consultation exercise into this proposal, I will consider all the issues and how they might relate to other locations such as Clady.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Regional Development when the Strabane to Omagh section of the A5 will begin; and how much it will cost.

(AQW 55243/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: In its Budget 2016/17 the Executive made allocations for a single year, however, the nature of some capital projects means it is important to provide certainty over a longer time span. The Executive therefore agreed a commitment to the seven Flagship projects, including the A5, with funding allocated between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Subject to the successful completion of statutory procedures the funding profile for the A5WTC would permit the New Buildings to north of Strabane section (Phase 1a) to commence construction in 2017 with an estimated completion date of 2019. It would also suggest that the South of Omagh to Ballygawley section (Phase 1b) of the scheme could commence in the latter part of the five-year budget period. Further work is required in conjunction with officials from DFP, to clarify this phase, which would require a commitment to a significant residual expenditure in the subsequent budget period.

The next stage in progression of the scheme would then be construction of the north of Strabane to south of Omagh section (Phase 2). There is currently no funding profile available for this section.

For the purposes of assessment within the Environmental Statement for the scheme however, Phase 2 is programmed for completion within the 2021 to 2023 timeframe.

At current prices the cost of the north of Strabane to south of Omagh section of the scheme is estimated in the region of £495 million.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the costs incurred by Translink due to vandalism, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55291/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The costs incurred by Translink in each of the last five years as a result of vandalism are outlined in the below table:

Financial Year	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Costs (£)	776,575	627,229	732,820	755,643	618,070

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the progress of the A31 Magherafelt bypass. (AQW 55306/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Construction work on the A31 Magherafelt Bypass began in May 2015 and is progressing well. I can confirm that the bulk earthworks are around 80% complete and that construction of the various structures is at an advanced stage.

It is anticipated that the road should be open and available to traffic in October 2016.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the planned road works in Lagan Valley. (AQO 9879/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has programmed and is completing road works in the Lagan Valley area:

- Carriageway resurfacing at the following locations:
 - Governors Road
 - Lany Road (Bridge Road – Meadow Bridge Primary School)
 - Moira Road (St James Road to Kilwarlin Road)
 - Dromore Road (A1 – Edentrillick Road)
 - Refords Lane.
- Carriageway Refurbishing works at the following locations:
 - Ballynahinch Road, Hillsborough
 - Glebe Road, Annahilt
 - Glenwood Court, Lisburn
 - Front Road / Mealough Road, Drumbo
 - Hammond Road, Maghaberry
 - Lower Ballinderry Road (now complete).
- Verge strengthening works at the following locations:
 - Crumlin Road
 - Tornagrough Road
- Structural drainage works at the following locations:
 - Pond Park Road
 - McKinstry Road.
- Renewal of road markings at the following locations:
 - A26 Moira / Glenavy Road
 - Derriaghy Road
 - Antrim Road
 - Pond Park Road
- Minor road improvements at the following locations:
 - B23 Hillhall Road (near junction with Glen Road) – bend improvement
 - Knockmore Road Lisburn - Footway Link
 - Bottier Road, Moira - New footway
- Maintenance of structures at the following locations:
 - Baileysmill Bridge, on A49 Old Ballynahinch Rd - Parapet repairs
 - A49 Old Ballynahinch Rd - Removal of retaining wall
 - Queensway - Parapet repairs (structural assessment in progress)
 - Potters Bridge - Parapet repairs (programmed April 2016)
 - A26 Glenavy Road at Upper Ballinderry - Parapet repairs and VRS extension (programmed March 2016)
 - Glenavy Footbridge, A26 Moira Road - Chord repairs (programmed April 2016)

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development when the public consultation on the Ballygawley to Omagh section of the A5 will begin. (AQO 9872/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: On 11 February 2016 I announced the start of consultations by my Department on new draft Statutory Orders and a new Environmental Statement for the scheme. This has led to the commencement of a formal consultation process on 16 February 2016 and this will run through to 4 April 2016.

This on-going consultation exercise includes the section between Omagh and Ballygawley as it relates to New draft Vesting Orders for:

- Phase 1A - from New Buildings to north of Strabane;
- Phase 1B - from south of Omagh to Ballygawley; and
- Phase 2 - from north of Strabane to south of Omagh; together with
- A new draft Direction Order for the length of scheme between New Buildings and Ballygawley,
- A new draft Stopping Up of Private Accesses Order for the length of scheme between New Buildings and Ballygawley, and
- A new Environmental Statement for the full scheme between New Buildings and the border at Aughnacloy.

Public exhibitions were held over a four day period between 1 and 4 March 2016 at four different venues - the Everglades Hotel, Londonderry; The Fir Trees Hotel Strabane; The Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh; and Smyth Memorial Hall in Ballygawley, thus ensuring consultation at locations local to the affected areas. These events were attended by over 1000 people and feedback was largely positive.

I am aware however that strategic and individual concerns remain for a number of people and my Department will be seeking to address these concerns going forward as far as practicably possible.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development how she is addressing the concerns of residents regarding the new LED street lighting schemes.

(AQO 9869/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: LEDs are now the preferred choice for my Department's new and replacement street lighting schemes. LEDs produce good quality white light, and their low energy use and long-life characteristics provide very substantial reductions in both electricity and maintenance costs.

LED street lights have now been installed in many hundreds of streets and roads in Northern Ireland, mostly without any adverse reaction from residents or road users. However, I acknowledge that some concerns have been raised about certain locations within the ongoing LED pilot project in the Banbridge and Craigavon areas. That project aims to retrofit LEDs to around 15,000 street lights; the work is currently around two thirds complete, with almost 10,000 street lights already changed to LEDs.

I can assure members that, when complaints are received, each issue is individually recorded and assessed, with lighting levels checked against the required standards. For the majority of locations which have been assessed to date, the new LED lighting has been found to meet the appropriate lighting levels as recommended in the British Standard for road lighting.

However, where any of the new lighting has been found to be sub-standard, then corrective action has been taken, or will be taken very soon, to bring the lighting to the appropriate standard.

I am committed to ensuring that all concerns raised are addressed as the LED pilot project progresses, and as we seek to realise the very significant environmental and financial benefits of LED street lighting across Northern Ireland.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the progress of the Belfast Transport Hub at Great Victoria Street.

(AQO 9875/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The Belfast Hub has been identified by the Northern Ireland Executive as one of seven flagship projects for funding recognising its strategic importance in supporting the growth of the Northern Ireland economy.

The project aims to provide a state of the art, multi-modal transport interchange that will be central to providing improved transport connectivity. It will combine rail and bus termini with taxi, private car, cycling and eventually Rapid Transit modes situated within Belfast City Centre. It will facilitate improved rail links between Belfast and Dublin and aligns with my Departments wider rail strategy.

Translink has entered an important phase of the Belfast Hub Regeneration Project with the start of demolition works in the main construction site area situated along Grosvenor Road in the City Centre. I was delighted to attend a recent event to mark the start of these enabling works.

An Outline Business Case (OBC) has been produced, but is still to be agreed. The project will then enter a design / master planning phase with a possible planning application later in 2016 and at this stage an estimated completion date of 2021. However this timetable is clearly dependent upon relevant planning and funding approvals being secured.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development, following the A5 public consultation, whether she will proceed with a public enquiry.

(AQO 9876/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The A5 Western Transport Corridor dual carriageway scheme is one of the Northern Ireland Executive's flagship projects and within the 'A Fresh Start' Agreement, a commitment has been made to commence construction of the first phase of the scheme, between New Buildings and north of Strabane, in 2017.

As you will be aware, on 11 February 2016 I announced the start of consultations by my Department on new draft Statutory Orders and a new Environmental Statement for the scheme. This has led to the commencement of a formal consultation process on 16 February 2016 and this will run through to 4 April 2016.

Public exhibitions were held over a four day period between 1 and 4 March 2016, at the Everglades Hotel, Londonderry; The Fir Trees Hotel Strabane; The Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh; and Smyth Memorial Hall in Ballygawley. (I understand you attended the Exhibition in the Silverbirch Hotel).

As a significant number of objections are anticipated a Public Inquiry has been tentatively programmed for autumn 2016 and is expected to be administered by the Planning Appeals Commission.

Subject to the successful completion of all the statutory procedures and a satisfactory outcome from the Public Inquiry process, a decision can then be made regarding progression to the construction stage.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Regional Development when she, or her departmental officials, plan to meet with their counterparts in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to address significant cross-border infrastructure projects. **(AQO 9874/11-16)**

Miss M McIlveen: Due to the restricted amount of diary time available to me before the end of this mandate, and the uncertainty following the outcome of the General Election in the Republic of Ireland, I have no plans to attend or facilitate a Ministerial meeting to discuss cross-border infrastructure projects in my remaining time as Minister.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on traffic management on Belfast Road, Carrickfergus, adjacent to the Model Primary School. **(AQO 9877/11-16)**

Miss M McIlveen: I am aware of concerns about road safety at this location and my Department has recently implemented a series of Traffic Management measures on the Belfast Road to reinforce the existing 40mph speed limit. These measures included red patches on the carriageway with 40mph roundels and larger repeater signs.

I am also aware my officials met with you on site on 29 January 2016, along with PSNI and school representatives to discuss traffic management arrangement in the vicinity of the school.

Following this meeting, TransportNI has agreed to consider a number of proposals which include:-

- A review the existing permanent 40mph speed on A2 Belfast Road,
- Consider the provision of temporary 20mph zone on A2 within the vicinity of the school,
- Review of the existing pedestrian guard rail layout at the school entrance to provide better pedestrian discipline at the Pelican crossing,
- Consider an upgrade of the existing Pelican crossing to a Puffin crossing, and
- Refresh the existing 'school keep clear' markings at the rear entrance to the school on Maritime Drive.

It should be noted that implementation of any of the measures is dependent on the availability of necessary Capital funding.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Regional Development what assistance is being provided to developers and communities in the delivery of soft and hard sustainable drainage system schemes. **(AQO 9880/11-16)**

Miss M McIlveen: On the 25th January 2016, the Assembly agreed the final stage of the Water and Sewerage Services Bill. This Bill defines the types of hard engineered SuDS that Northern Ireland Water will adopt and maintain. It also introduces measures relating to soft SuDS, giving Northern Ireland Water the power to refuse a surface water connection where these types of suitable alternative drainage systems exist, or can be provided. My Department, in partnership with Northern Ireland Water, is currently preparing advice for developers to assist in the transition arrangements, and these will be available shortly via the NI Water website.

In addition, information leaflets will be issued to developers, and Northern Ireland Water is currently revising its publication: 'Sewers for Adoption', which will clearly set out, for developers, the types of SuDS which Northern Ireland Water will adopt.

Officials are also giving presentations at construction industry events to explain the impacts of the Bill in relation to SuDS.

Further work is still needed with the relevant key stakeholders to co-ordinate the necessary guidance documents and approval processes. This will be taken forward by the Stormwater Management Group, which includes all the relevant stakeholders.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the Strangford Ferry slipway improvement works. **(AQO 9881/11-16)**

Miss M McIlveen: The construction work on the Strangford Ferry Infrastructure Upgrade works commenced in late January 2016.

The upgrade works include the extension and re-profiling of the Strangford slipway and also the provision of an upgraded off-shore mooring system.

These harbour upgrades are required to facilitate the delivery of the new ferry in Autumn 2016.

The Contractor, Dawson WAM, has recently completed the construction of a temporary slipway for use by the ferry service whilst construction work is undertaken on the permanent slipway.

The Strangford Lough Ferry service commenced operating via the temporary slipway on Thursday 3 March 2016.

The Contractor has now mobilised on the permanent slipway and has commenced works to extend and re-profile the permanent slipway.

The construction works, thus far, have not caused any significant disruption to the operation of the ferry service and we will continue to work closely with the contractor to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum.

The upgrade works are planned to be complete by mid-April of this year.

Department for Social Development

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the key targets of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Community Cohesion Strategy; and (ii) how it will contribute to the removal of interface barriers and a reduction in the 90 per cent segregation of social housing on the basis of community background.

(AQW 54720/11-16)

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development):

- (i) The NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy was launched on 19 February 2016. The Strategy is available on the Housing Executive website. The key aims of the Strategy are:
- To contribute to the creation of more stable, safer and cohesive neighbourhoods;
 - To work in partnership to address the complex housing needs of a divided society;
 - To respond to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict; and
 - To facilitate mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.
- (ii) The Justice Minister is in the lead in respect of delivery of the Together Building United Communities (TBUC) headline action concerning the removal of peace walls by 2023.

The NIHE is working in partnership through a Programme Board established by the Department of Justice. Through the Programme Board, the Department for Social Development and Northern Ireland Housing Executive, alongside other Departments and statutory agencies, will play a key role in creating the social, community, physical and economic regeneration that is central to delivering the sort of change necessary within interface communities to secure the removal of physical barriers.

In order to target segregation in existing social housing estates the Housing Executive delivers programme that promote integration, including Building Relationships in Communities, the Shared Neighbourhood and Shared Communities Programme. The Housing Executive, through its Community Cohesion Office, also supports the Department for Social Development in the delivery of related TBUC commitments:

- An overarching review of housing to bring forward recommendations on how to enhance shared neighbourhoods; and
- To create 10 new shared neighbourhoods.

Both commitments are being progressed and will assist in targeting segregation in Northern Ireland.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for an update on the progress of (a) the Department for Social Development and Northern Ireland Housing Executive Asset Commission; (b) Asset Management Strategy; and (c) five year investment plan for Northern Ireland Housing Executive stock; (ii) when the findings of the Asset Commission will be published; (iii) when the Asset Management Strategy will be published; (iv) when the five year investment plan will be published; and (v) what strategic and tactical outputs it will include.

(AQW 54724/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Asset Commission, jointly procured by the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, has been completed and was published on 8 March 2016 on the websites of both organisations along with the Asset Management Strategy.

Following my approval of the Asset Management Strategy the Housing Executive is now translating this agreed strategic approach into an operational investment plan. The plan will cover the 10 year period from 2017/18 and will set out where and in what types of works the Housing Executive intends to invest. The scope and extent of the plan will, however, be subject to

the likely availability of finance over this period. The current intention is that the plan will be finalised, approved and published later in 2016/17.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of homeless people that (a) are excluded from multiple homeless shelters; (b) are failed asylum seekers; (c) have no recourse to benefits; (d) are excluded from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive duty of care; or (e) are excluded from being considered a full duty applicant.
(AQW 54896/11-16)

Lord Morrow:

- (a) The Housing Executive does not maintain statistical records on individuals excluded from multiple homeless accommodation. Where a homeless person has Full Duty Applicant status under the housing legislation the Housing Executive may discharge that duty in stages via temporary accommodation until a permanent accommodation solution can be found. Where a person, who is a Full Duty Applicant, is excluded from multiple shelters the duty remains, and the Housing Executive will continue to secure accommodation for that applicant so long as it is required.
- (b) The Home Office's UK Visas and Immigration department are responsible for maintaining information on asylum seekers. This information is not recorded by the Housing Executive.
- (c) The Housing Executive nor the Social Security Agency do not maintain statistical records on homeless individuals who have no recourse to benefits.
- (d) There is no defined "Housing Executive duty of care." However, the Housing Executive's statutory duties, in relation to homelessness, are defined in the Housing (NI) Order 1988 as amended. The main duties in relation to a person presenting as homeless are:
 - Interim duty to accommodate pending enquiries: the Housing Executive will provide temporary accommodation to those requiring it while investigations into their case are ongoing;
 - Full Housing Duty (including protection of belongings) to applicants who are found to be: homeless, eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless;
 - Advice and assistance duty to all other applicants who do not meet the statutory criteria for Full Duty Applicant Status. As part of the Housing Options approach, the Housing Executive will explore other housing options with such applicants such as the private rented sector and will signpost to support agencies where appropriate.

Therefore, the level of duty owed to an applicant under the homelessness legislation will be dependent upon the individual circumstances of each applicant.
- (e) The circumstances of all individuals presenting as homeless are considered and fully investigated. Those who meet the statutory requirements of homelessness, eligibility, priority need and are unintentionally homeless will be awarded Full Duty Applicant status.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what (a) strategies; and (b) provisions the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has in place to support homeless people that (i) are excluded from multiple homeless shelters; (ii) are failed asylum seekers home; (iii) have no recourse to benefits; and (iv) are excluded from being a full duty applicant.
(AQW 54897/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has statutory responsibilities for responding to homelessness under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. The Housing Executive's current Homelessness Strategy, produced under the auspices of this legislation, focuses on prevention and early intervention.

Where a person has full duty applicant status, the Housing Executive may discharge that duty in stages, via temporary accommodation, until a permanent accommodation solution can be found. Where a person, who is a full duty applicant, is excluded from multiple shelters, the duty remains, and the Housing Executive will continue to secure accommodation for that applicant so long as it is required.

People generally become excluded from temporary accommodation due to a combination of complex factors, including behavioural issues, poor mental health, addictions and an inability or unwillingness to engage with services attached to accommodation facilities. The Housing Executive has developed a range of services to assist individuals with complex needs. These include:

- a range of high tolerance, low threshold supported accommodation;
- a pilot Housing First Model, which case manages complex individuals in individual accommodation with wraparound support;
- In Belfast, the Housing Executive and Belfast Trust work with Extern to provide a Multi-Disciplinary Homeless Support Team.

The Housing Executive has no statutory authority to provide accommodation to failed Asylum Seekers or others with no recourse to public funds and must operate within the bounds of UK immigration law.

Persons subject to immigration control and other persons from abroad with no recourse to public funds are entitled to free advice in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. This may include referring the applicant to other support agencies. If the Housing Executive has decided the homeless applicant is a person who is ineligible, but believes they are destitute, and has a pre-existing care need or has children in the household, the Housing Executive may secure the services of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety under the Health & Personal Services (NI) Order 1972. In the same way, the Health and Social Care Trusts have a duty under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 to provide services for persons under 18 who are children in need. Therefore, the Housing Executive will make a referral to the relevant Health and Social Care Trust in such instances.

The Housing Executive has a duty to provide advice and assistance to any homeless applicants who do not meet the statutory criteria for Full Duty Applicant status. Advice and assistance includes signposting to self-referral hostels, providing information on routes into the privately rented sector and other housing tenures. People who are not awarded full duty applicant status, and who remain eligible for housing services, can also be placed on the social housing waiting list.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the implications of an EU exit on his Department and the new Department for Communities; and what preparations his Department has made for an EU exit.
(AQW 54921/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Following the EU Council meeting on 18-19 of February the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announced a referendum on membership of the European Union to be held on 23 June 2016.

The implications of the outcome of the referendum will be for the Minister of the new Department for Communities to consider.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many of the planned (i) kitchen; (ii) boiler; and (iii) maintenance schemes in North Down, in 2015-16, were completed.

(AQW 54975/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided details of the following planned schemes that it commenced in 2015/16 that have been completed. There are several other planned schemes which started in 2015/16 but are ongoing and will not be completed this financial year.

Scheme	No. of Dwellings	Start date
Kilcooley Heating	58	27/4/15
Conlig Kitchens	41	14/9/15

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (a) number; and (b) percentage by community background of staff recruited to the Social Security Agency in each year since 2013.

(AQW 54984/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Information on the number of staff recruited to the Social Security Agency is provided below:

- 2013 316 staff
- 2014 62 staff
- 2015 2 staff
- 2016 to date 1 staff

Information on the community background of staff in the NICS is held centrally by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, who provided the following information in relation to part (b) of your question:

SSA Appointees by Community Background

Year	Protestant %	Catholic %	Not Determined %
2013	40.8	56.3	2.8
2014	25.8 – 30.6	67.7	1.6 – 6.5

It is not possible to provide a community background for 2015 and 2016 due to the small number of appointees (2 in 2015 and 1 in 2016).

The number of appointees in 2014 whose community background is 'Not Determined' is too small to release (fewer than 5) and so ranges have been provided for this category and the next smallest group (Protestant).

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of judicial reviews that have been instigated following a benefit appeals decision; and of those (ii) how many were successful.

(AQW 54994/11-16)

Lord Morrow: In the last three years there has been one judicial review following a Benefit Appeal and this was successful.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.
(AQW 54996/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Department has provided match funding to facilitate drawdown from three European programmes in West Tyrone during this period. Information is not available at the level of detail requested in all instances.

During the financial period (2005- 2009) under the PEACE II Programme the Department provided the match funding to 42 projects located in the West Tyrone constituency facilitating a total spend of £947,339.

During the financial period (2007-2015) under the PEACE III Programme the Department provided the match funding to 1 Project located in the West Tyrone constituency, the Oasis Project in Omagh, facilitating a total spend of £2.8m.

The Department through its arms length body the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has also provided match funding (50%) between 2012/13 and 2014/15 to enable European Regional Development Funds totalling an estimated £825,650 to be used to implement the Boiler Replacement Scheme. A further £83,000 has been spent on Peace Initiative projects.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the location and number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive stock that has transferred under the Stock Transfer Programme since 2012; and (ii) for an update on how many may transfer in the future.
(AQW 55014/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Since 2012 there has been one stock transfer completed consisting of 72 Housing Executive properties in Bloomfield, Bangor.

As part of the Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland the NIHE has developed a Stock Transfer Programme for 2,000 further homes.

Ultimately however it will be the tenants of these homes (through a ballot) to decide whether a transfer to a Housing Association proceeds or not.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of units each housing association (i) currently controls; (ii) is preparing for occupation in the 2016-17 financial year; and how many of these are in South Down.
(AQW 55015/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The 22 Registered Housing Associations within Northern Ireland currently control 39,053 units of social housing (see table attached for breakdown).

With regard to the proposed development for 2016-17, please note that schemes can be lost or slipped to future programme years for a variety of reasons e.g. relating to Planning or site acquisition. Schemes can also be added in-year through the acquisition of existing satisfactory or off-the-shelf properties; or through the annual housing association bidding round.

Housing Association	(i) Total number of units at 31 March 2015	(ii) Units being prepared for occupation in 2016/17	Breakdown within South Down Parliamentary Constituency
Abbeyfield and Wesley	330	0	0
Alpha	959	9	0
Apex	4,596	519	0
Ark	350	13	5
Choice	7,976	491	23
Clanmil	3,806	825	0
Connswater	759	106	0
Covenanter	42	0	0
Craigowen	336	0	0
Fold	5,956	375	0
Grove	218	0	0
Habinteg	2,168	320	18
Hearth	98	10	0
Helm	5,546	176	17
Newington	508	0	0
NICHA	0	0	0

Housing Association	(i) Total number of units at 31 March 2015	(ii) Units being prepared for occupation in 2016/17	Breakdown within South Down Parliamentary Constituency
North Belfast	905	49	0
Open Door	401	0	0
Rural	431	11	5
South Ulster	1,048	65	0
St Matthews	202	0	0
Triangle	705	199	10
Ulidia	1,257	0	0
Woodvale & Shankill	456	0	0
Total	39,053	3168	78

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how much was spent in each of the five Northern Ireland Housing Executive contract areas in (a) 2012-13; (b) 2013-14; (c) 2014-15; and (d) 2015-16, on heating response maintenance, planned maintenance and planned installation, broken down by former council areas.

(AQW 55016/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information displayed in the attached tables, which also includes spend on disabled adaptations heating and frost stats.

The Housing Executive has advised that it cannot provide the information broken down by former council areas as requested as the data is not held in that format. However it has provided, in an additional table, details of the local NIHE office areas that are within each of the five contract areas.

2012-13	Contract Area					Grand Total
Description	Belfast	North East	South	South East	West	Grand Total
Heat Servicing	£1,778,517	£1,551,396	£127,970	£1,177,611	£777,056	£5,412,550
Frost Stats	£105,420	£248,655	£600	£95,880	£261,162	£711,717
Disabled Adaptations Heating	£83,848	£72,442	£55,791	£90,632	£117,927	£420,641
Heating Installations	£3,617,668	£3,288,873	£3,710,950	£4,667,446	£3,375,474	£18,660,410
Heating Response Maintenance	£816,835	£995,810	£591,687	£976,836	£630,602	£4,011,770
Total	£6,402,288	£6,157,175	£4,486,998	£7,008,406	£5,162,221	£29,217,088

2013-14	Contract Area					Grand Total
Description	Belfast	North East	South	South East	West	Grand Total
Heat Servicing	£1,685,763	£1,863,334	£777,509	£1,424,477	£1,579,349	£7,330,433
Frost Stats	£23,050	£140,678		£102,983	£133,871	£400,582
Disabled Adaptations Heating	£68,250	£85,311	£98,308	£53,613	£105,000	£410,482
Heating Installations	£8,080,945	£2,639,099	£6,218,517	£3,599,861	£3,803,525	£24,341,947
Heating Response Maintenance	£481,622	£1,100,372	£342,582	£639,782	£684,215	£3,248,572
Total	£10,339,631	£5,828,795	£7,436,916	£5,820,715	£6,305,960	£35,732,016

2014-15	Contract Area					
Description	Belfast	North East	South	South East	West	Grand Total
Heat Servicing	£1,939,379	£2,075,764	£977,562	£1,601,090	£1,717,218	£8,311,012
Frost Stats	£97,938	£136,365	0	£85,624	£256,170	£576,097
Heating Installations	£11,035,258	£4,410,331	£8,274,626	£4,067,963	£3,301,927	£31,090,105
Heating Response Maintenance	£603,779	£928,426	£598,618	£790,895	£690,059	£3,611,778
Total	£13,676,354	£7,550,886	£9,850,806	£6,545,572	£5,965,375	£43,588,992

2015-16 (to end Feb)	Contract Area					
Description	Belfast	North East	South	South East	West	Grand Total
Heat Servicing	£1,791,789	£1,759,651	£829,697	£1,471,197	£1,581,734	£7,434,067
Frost Stats	0	£1,135	0	0	0	£1,135
Heating Installations	£7,450,993	£4,102,264	£4,472,008	£3,257,663	£2,167,727	£21,450,656
Heating Response Maintenance	£437,262	£846,936	£599,636	£590,078	£640,302	£3,114,214
Total	£9,680,044	£6,709,985	£5,901,341	£5,318,938	£4,389,763	£32,000,071

Total (2012-16)	Contract Area					
Description	Belfast	North East	South	South East	West	Grand Total
Heat Servicing	£7,195,448	£7,250,145	£2,712,738	£5,674,375	£5,655,357	£28,488,062
Frost Stats	£226,408	£526,833	£600	£284,486	£651,203	£1,689,530
Disabled Adaptations Heating	£152,098	£157,752	£154,100	£144,245	£222,927	£818,735
Heating Installations	£30,184,865	£14,440,566	£22,676,101	£15,592,933	£12,648,654	£95,555,506
Heating Response Maintenance	£2,339,498	£3,871,544	£2,132,522	£2,997,592	£2,645,179	£13,986,334
Total	£40,098,316	£26,246,840	£27,676,061	£24,693,630	£21,823,319	£140,538,167

Note:

- 1) From 2014/15 disabled adaptation heating schemes were included within the main heating installation schemes.

Local Office area	Contract Area
West Belfast	Belfast
Belfast Shankill	Belfast
South Belfast	Belfast
East Belfast	Belfast
North Belfast	Belfast
Bangor	South East
Newtownards	South East
Dairy Farm	South East
Lisburn	South East
Castlereagh	South East
Downpatrick	South East
Portadown	South
Lurgan	South

Local Office area	Contract Area
Banbridge	South
Armagh	South
Fermanagh	South
Newry	South
Banbridge District	South
Newry District	South
Armagh District	South
Dungannon District	South
Newtownabbey 1	North East
Antrim	North East
Newtownabbey 2	North East
Coleraine	North East
Ballymoney	North East
Ballycastle	North East
Ballymena	North East
Larne	North East
Carrickfergus	North East
Limavady	West
Collon Terrace	West
Waterside	West
Waterloo Place	West
Strabane	West
Omagh	West
Magherafelt District	West
Cookstown District	West

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants that have availed of the right to buy their property since 2012, broken down by financial year.

(AQW 55017/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The total number of tenants who have availed of the Housing Executive's 'House Sales Scheme' to purchase their homes since 2012 is as follows:

Year	Completions
2015 –end Jan 2016	313
2014/15	471
2013/14	549
2012/13	290
Total	1,623

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of his Department's efforts to ensure people entitled to benefits are claiming them.

(AQW 55038/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I am delighted with my Department's efforts in ensuring that every individual and household across Northern Ireland is receiving all the social security benefits, supports and services to which they and their families are entitled.

Since 2005, Benefit Uptake Programmes have generated almost £100 million of additional benefits for people who are entitled to them but not claiming. Many of those benefitting are vulnerable either through age, illness or disability, or other life changing personal circumstances.

All staff within the Social Security Agency have a role to play in ensuring that people receive their full benefit entitlement, however, the Improving Benefit Uptake team who are part of the Social Security Agency are specifically tasked with delivering my Department's current benefit uptake programme, which they have achieved with considerable success.

Improving Benefit Uptake have adopted a multi strand approach which includes indirect targeting led by the high profile 'Make the Call' advertising campaign, direct targeting which each year targets around 25,000 older people by letter encouraging them to call for a free Benefit Entitlement Check, and the Community Outreach Service who conduct home visits with some of the most vulnerable people in society, providing face to face assistance and support.

Improving Benefit Uptake also have comprehensive partnership arrangements in place across Government, independent statutory bodies, the advice and voluntary sectors and community organisations to ensure that effective targeting and engagement with the widest possible range of potential customers is achieved.

I remain committed to ensuring that my Department's benefit uptake programmes will be maintained and further developed going forward.

Mr Diver asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55087/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Department has provided match funding to facilitate drawdown from four

European programmes in Foyle during this period. Information is not available at the level of detail requested in all instances.

During the financial period (2005-2009) under the PEACE II Programme the Department provided the match funding to 81 projects located in the Foyle constituency facilitating a total spend of £3.1m.

During the financial period (2007-2015) under the PEACE III Programme the Department provided the match funding to 3 projects located in Foyle constituency, The Peace Bridge, City Centre Garden of Reflection and the Siege Museum facilitating a total spend of £8.8m.

The Department through its arms length body the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has also provided match funding (50%) between 2012/13 and 2014/15 to enable European Regional Development Funds totalling an estimated £541,100 to be used to implement the Boiler Replacement Scheme. A further £83,000 has been spent on Peace Initiative projects.

Between 2008 and 2015 the Department provided the match funding element totalling over £1.6m to a number of European Social Fund projects in Foyle (total project spend £14.6m). Details of the match spend by year is provided in the table overleaf.

Ref No	Applicant	Project	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total	
NWDO NR 42/54	Derry LSP	DSD		£100,000.00	£100,000.00					£200,000.00	
		DEL	£162,421.00	£272,419.00	£228,207.00					£663,047.00	
		ESF	£259,873.00	£435,870.00	£365,132.00						£1,060,875.00
		Other	£227,389.00	£281,386.00	£219,490.00						£728,265.00
		Total	£649,683.00	£1,089,675.00	£912,829.00						£2,652,187.00
NWDO NR 42/55	North West Centre for Learning and Development	DSD	£6,343.70	£29,785.40	£25,207.52					£61,336.71	
		DEL	£5,320.50	£21,282.00	£21,282.00					£47,884.50	
		ESF									
		Total	£8,512.80	£34,051.20	£34,051.20						£76,615.20
NWDO NR 42/56	The Cresco Trust	DSD		£127,458.49	£123,108.21					£250,566.70	
		DEL		£96,721.00	£100,189.00					£196,910.00	
		ESF		£154,754.00	£160,303.00						£315,057.00
		Total	£378,933.49	£383,600.21							£762,533.70
		DSD	£3,451.31	£50,649.12	£54,940.72						£109,041.15
NWDO NR 42/57	C.O.R.E. Neighbourhood Partnership	DEL	£2,465.81	£36,178.58	£42,144.00					£80,788.39	
		ESF	£3,945.41	£57,885.90	£67,431.00						£129,262.31
		Total	£9,862.53	£144,713.60	£164,515.72						£319,091.85
NWDO NR 42/58	Triax	DSD		£53,128.56	£30,175.22					£83,303.78	
		DEL		£56,287.00	£22,865.00					£79,152.00	
		ESF		£90,059.00	£36,584.00						£126,643.00
		Total	£199,474.56	£89,624.22							£289,098.78
		DSD				£234,456.84	£248,741.25				£742,089.39
NWDO/ NR/45/11	Triax Ltd	DEL				£196,758.00	£205,350.00	£205,470.00		£607,578.00	
		ESF				£314,812.00	£328,559.00	£328,751.00		£972,122.00	
		Other				£39,161.70	£38,748.90	£28,765.70		£106,676.30	
		Total	£785,188.54	£821,399.15	£821,878.00					£2,428,465.69	
NWDO/ NR/17/14	Triax Ltd	DSD							£189,978.78	£189,978.78	
		DEL							£170,253.05	£170,253.05	
		ESF							£272,404.88	£272,404.88	
		Other							£48,354.27	£48,354.27	
		Total	£9,795.01	£361,021.66	£333,431.67	£234,456.84	£248,741.25	£258,891.30	£189,978.78	£680,990.98	£1,636,316.51

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development (i) whether he is aware of the erection, without planning permission, of a Republican Memorial by Republican Sinn Féin on land owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Lurgantarry Estate, Lurgan; (ii) when this issue was first brought to the attention of the local Northern Ireland Housing Executive office; and (iii) what action is being taken to address this issue.

(AQW 55161/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that in relation to:-

- (i) They can confirm that a memorial is on Housing Executive land in the Lurgantarry Estate, Lurgan. It has recently been built without planning permission or the approval of the Housing Executive. No-one approached the Housing Executive seeking permission to erect the memorial, and they would not have supported a memorial of this nature.
- (ii) The local Housing Executive office was made aware of the memorial being built on NIHE land approximately a month ago.
- (iii) The replacement or removal of symbols such as murals and memorials is a complex and sensitive matter. No one, single agency can work on its own to do this. It needs a number of agencies and bodies to work together, as well as involving the public and relevant communities. The safety of NIHE staff and contractors is paramount. Having consulted with the PSNI the NIHE believes they could not guarantee their safety if an attempt was made to remove this structure. The NIHE will continue to work with those who live on their estates, their representatives and other agencies to look at an alternative use for these spaces.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the loans advanced by his Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in North Down, since 1 April 2013.

(AQW 55239/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department has advanced Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) loans totalling just over £135 million to four housing associations to support the delivery of affordable homes since 01 April 2013.

The Northern Ireland Co – Ownership Housing Association (NICHA) has received nearly £107 million of this funding, £94.5 million of which has been allocated to fund its core shared ownership scheme for the next four financial years (April 2015 to March 2019), with remainder ring-fenced to pilot 'Rent to Own' scheme.

As you may be aware, Co – Ownership operates a DIYSO shared ownership model. Essentially, this means that its customers find their own property on the open market but approach NICHA for financial support. As of end February 2016, the FTC funding had enabled NICHA to assist 382 low income households into homeownership, 34 of the properties purchased were situated in North Down parliamentary constituency representing a spend of £1,201,438. 'Rent to Own' has just been launched in the last week and, as you will appreciate, sufficient time has not passed to allow NICHA to complete on applications to the scheme.

Three Housing Associations (Apex, Clanmil and Choice) have received £19 million in FTC to pilot the Affordable Home Loans Fund, with Clanmil receiving a further £9.2 million through the empty homes strategy.

Under the AHLF, the housing associations are responsible for building and refurbishing homes for sale, and the development of a new shared ownership product (Fairshare). The delivery of Fairshare to the market, as might be expected with any new initiative, has been subject to some delay. More, recently good progress has been made, with three major lenders agreeing to provide complementary mortgage products and the launch of the Fairshare website (to accept applications) expected in April 2016. It is anticipated that this pilot will provide up to 600 homes across NI by 2020; however, at present it is too early to say where all these homes will be situated.

As for the empty homes project, Clanmil anticipate that the funding will allow it to bring 153 empty properties back into use across Northern Ireland either for sale or private rent. To date, six empty properties, with an approximate cost of £63,000 per property, have been purchased in the North Down constituency area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 54188/11-16, (i) in which financial year was the through assessment and appraisal process completed for projects his Department funded in 2015-16, by way of salaries and running costs to facilitate the provision of childcare; and (ii) whether the thorough assessment and appraisal process took into account the amount of Early Years funding received by each of these organisations in 2015-16 from the Department of Education.

(AQW 55250/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The assessment and appraisal process for the projects my Department funded in 2015-16 by way of salaries and running costs to facilitate the provision of childcare was completed in 2014-15, taking into account at that time, any other sources of funding including Early Years.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what steps are being taken to ensure private sector landlords, regarded as Joint Owner Landlords and entitled to refunds of registration fees, are informed of their refund entitlement.

(AQW 55266/11-16)

Lord Morrow: According to the Landlord Registration Scheme database, there were almost 8,500 Joint Owner Private Sector Landlords that needed to be contacted about the refund of the registration fee.

Initial information about the refunds was publicised in December 2015, both by a press release and my Department speaking on the BBC's 'On Your Behalf' programme.

A phased approach was taken to contact all Joint Owner Landlords from the middle of December 2015 and was carried out by NI Direct, who are our front line delivery partners for the scheme.

Contacts to those landlords were made by;

- Text message where a mobile number was provided, followed up at a later stage by an email if there was no response to the original text;
- Where an email address was only provided, emails were issued;
- For landline numbers, outbound calls were made and where contact couldn't be made initially, a second and third telephone call was attempted.
- A small number of landlords had to be contacted by post which was done via the March 2016 edition of the 'Landlord Newsletter' which has been issued and goes to all registered landlords.

All Joint Owner Landlords should now have been contacted and a reminder has been inserted in the Landlord Newsletter to those Joint Owner Landlords who have not enquired about the refund to contact NI Direct before the end of March 2016.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on window replacement work in Rectory Park, Portadown. (AQW 55301/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has confirmed that its properties in Rectory Park currently have wooden retrofit double-glazed units. The properties have now been included in a window replacement scheme. The Housing Executive is currently in the process of procuring a contractor to carry out this scheme which it anticipates will commence in September 2016, subject to a successful tendering process.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 54767/11-16 and given oil and gas are cheaper than Economy 7, why the Northern Ireland Housing Executive continues to install Economy 7. (AQW 55315/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised me that when a heating system or boiler is due for renewal, it is its policy to offer gas, where this is available, and oil heating systems where gas is not available or practicable.

The Housing Executive will only install Economy 7 heating systems where it is not practical or feasible to install either gas or oil, due to reasons of the property's height and structure, or in instances where tenants specifically request Economy 7 heating.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Social Development to outline his plans for social housing in the Dromore, County Down area over the next three years. (AQO 9887/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Based on the Housing Executive's latest housing need assessment, there is a projected need for six dwellings in Dromore Town over the next three years.

The need refers to a requirement for additional accommodation for active elderly in the town. Helm Housing will take forward a scheme to deliver a six, two bedroom apartment development in Rampart Street during 2016/17.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the proportion of people currently claiming Support for Mortgage Interest that are pensioners, broken down by constituency. (AQW 55334/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department cannot supply information on the proportion of people claiming support for mortgage interest that are pensioners, but can supply the number of pensioners in receipt of support for mortgage interest. The table overleaf details figures by Parliamentary Constituency at November 2015, which is the most up to date information available.

Parliamentary Constituency	No of Pensioners
Belfast East	100
Belfast North	180
Belfast South	90
Belfast West	590
East Antrim	130
East Londonderry	150
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	150
Foyle	440

Parliamentary Constituency	No of Pensioners
Lagan Valley	100
Mid Ulster	190
Newry and Armagh	280
North Antrim	120
North Down	140
South Antrim	160
South Down	190
Strangford	110
Upper Bann	200
West Tyrone	200
Unassigned	10
Overall	3,520

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people (a) eligible for; and (b) that claimed Support for Mortgage Interest in the last twelve months, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 55335/11-16)

Lord Morrow: It is not possible to detail the number of people eligible for Support for Mortgage Interest as this is dependent on an individuals' ability to meet the qualifying criteria. The number of claimants in receipt of Support for Mortgage Interest by Parliamentary Constituency at November 2015 is detailed in the table overleaf. This is the most up to date information available.

Parliamentary Constituency	No of People
Belfast East	470
Belfast North	890
Belfast South	460
Belfast West	1,920
East Antrim	590
East Londonderry	770
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	660
Foyle	1,330
Lagan Valley	440
Mid Ulster	1,000
Newry and Armagh	1,310
North Antrim	590
North Down	450
South Antrim	680
South Down	910
Strangford	470
Upper Bann	960
West Tyrone	870
Unassigned	60
Overall	14,810

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how measures contained in the Housing (Amendment) Bill NIA 58/11-16, will help the Northern Ireland Housing Executive address anti-social behaviour.

(AQW 55345/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Existing legislation provides for a limited range of information about anti-social behaviour to be disclosed to the Housing Executive. However, clause 2 of the Housing (Amendment) Bill would allow any person to disclose a comprehensive range of information to the Housing Executive for the following purposes:

- applying for an injunction against anti-social behaviour; an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) or an order for possession on grounds relating to anti-social behaviour;
- conducting criminal proceedings for any offence;
- deciding whether to withhold consent to a mutual exchange of secure tenancies where a party to the exchange has been involved in anti-social behaviour;
- deciding whether a tenant who has been involved in anti-social behaviour is entitled to exercise the right to buy;
- deciding whether to treat an individual as ineligible for social housing or homelessness assistance on the basis that they have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour; and
- deciding whether to take any other appropriate action in relation to anti-social behaviour.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Social Development to detail what financial assistance his Department can offer FASA to support the organisation through its current funding difficulties.

(AQW 55474/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Until such times that there is full clarity on the reasons that have brought about the current situation at FASA, my Department is unable to offer any financial support to this organisation.

My Department will continue to work, where permissible, with FASA representatives, relevant NI Executive Departments and statutory agencies, and third sector organisations, to ensure alternative care pathways are put in place for service users who are most at need, alongside supporting staff where possible through welfare benefit and employment advice.

Mr Givan asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the actions the Northern Ireland Housing Executive can take to remove an illegal republican monument erected on their land.

(AQO 9889/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The removal of such monuments or symbols is a complex and sensitive matter. No one, single agency can work on its own to do this as it requires a number of agencies and bodies to work together, as well as involving the public and relevant communities. The Housing Executive has advised that they will continue to work with residents, their representatives and other agencies to look at an alternative use for these spaces.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any meetings with housing associations in relation to his Department's objections to the building of social housing in North Belfast.

(AQO 9890/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Building of new social housing is a Programme for Government commitment and DSD priority and this can be demonstrated by achievement year-on-year of PfG targets since 2011. 664 of the units delivered over this period were in North Belfast.

My Department also has statutory responsibilities for urban regeneration. While the Department's regeneration and housing policies are generally well-aligned, there are a rare number of occasions where broader regeneration goals and housing development are not entirely compatible. The two cases I am aware of in North Belfast were the schemes initially proposed for Girdwood and Frederick Street. In the case of Girdwood, Departmental officials engaged with housing providers and others to ensure a scheme which delivered both housing and regeneration objectives and in Frederick Street, the Department sought to support the delivery of important regeneration goals for Belfast through the re-development of the University of Ulster.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the development of Portrush Harbour.

(AQO 9891/11-16)

Lord Morrow: In 2011, Coleraine Borough Council commissioned a feasibility study, which determined that it was technically possible to extend, and pontoon Portrush harbour to create a marina with up to 220 berths at a potential cost of between £10M- £14M.

In June 2015, a further piece of work was commissioned to determine if other value for money development options were possible. It is anticipated that this additional work will be completed by 31st March 2016.

A Masterplan to explore development opportunities for the development of the landside of the harbour is expected to commence in the summer of 2016.

In addition to this, my Department has committed £500k from its capital budget in 2016/17 to allow design work to commence on a public realm scheme for Portrush and the re-development of Portrush train station. These projects are time critical and this work is essential if the capital build elements are to be completed before the Open Championship in 2019.

My Department has also provided funding for a £1.5 M public realm scheme in Portstewart. This scheme is underway and will complete around the end of May 2016.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development when he plans to introduce regulations confirming the non-application of the under-occupancy charge in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 9892/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Northern Ireland Executive confirmed in, 'A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan' the Social Sector Size Criteria, also known as the 'Bedroom Tax' or 'under-occupancy charge', will not apply in Northern Ireland.

The Welfare Reform Mitigations Working Group report led by Professor Eileen Evason welcomed this provision to provide full mitigation of the Social Sector Size Criteria for Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Housing Association tenants. I am currently considering options which will deliver the Executive's commitment that current and future claimants will not be impacted by the Social Sector Size Criteria.

Mr Craig asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans his Department has for the 59 army houses in Lisburn, gifted to it by the Ministry of Defence.

(AQO 9893/11-16)

Lord Morrow: On 4 February, the Secretary of State for Defence lodged a Written Statement in the House of Commons which included an announcement that the remaining 59 empty homes on the former army base at Mountview Drive, Lisburn will be gifted for development under the Economic Pact. These homes are to be transferred to Clanmil Housing Association for redevelopment via my Department. It is proposed that homes will be developed according to the model adopted by Clanmil for the first 36 properties on the site. This model was developed with local community and elected representatives and is based on a mixed tenure/shared housing approach.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the refurbishment of Moylena Court supported living facility in Antrim.

(AQO 9894/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive have confirmed that there have been informal talks with Choice Housing Association, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, NIAMH and the Housing Executive Supporting People team to explore the future development of Moylena Court, Antrim.

To date no proposal or business case has been received.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development how many new build homes are planned for the Ballymena, Ballymoney, Bushmills and Ballycastle areas in the next three years.

(AQO 9895/11-16)

Lord Morrow: There are no social housing schemes currently planned for the Bushmills area.

There are currently a total of 335 social housing units programmed to start, on-site, in Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle/Moyle as part of the Social Housing Development Programme 2016/17 – 2018/19.

In 2016/17 there are a total of 134 units programmed to start on site. These can be broken down to 66 in Ballymena, 26 in Ballymoney and 42 in Ballycastle/Moyle

In 2017/18 there are a total of 107 units programmed to start on site. These can be broken down to 101 in Ballymena, 6 in Ballycastle/Moyle.

In 2018/19 there are a total of 94 units programmed to start on site. These can be broken down to 40 in Ballymena, 20 in Ballymoney and 34 in Ballycastle/Moyle.

Please be advised that programmed schemes can be lost, or slip to future programme years, for a variety of reasons e.g. relating to site acquisition/achieving planning permission. Additional schemes can also be added to the Social Housing Development Programme through the purchase of Existing Satisfactory/Off-the-shelf properties in-year, and through the annual housing association bidding round/programme formulation process.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has commissioned any research to establish whether current social housing models are conducive to the recovery of people with drug or alcohol addiction.

(AQO 9896/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Neither the Department nor the Housing Executive has commissioned any specific research into this area. However the Housing Executive has developed a pilot 'Housing First' model to identify, place and support individuals with

acute and complex needs directly into accommodation with wrap around support. Initial outcomes from a pilot have been positive. An evaluation of its effectiveness is currently being undertaken.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to detail the audit process followed for the £700,000 payments to Research Services Ireland.

(AQW 54642/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Any payments to Research Services Ireland that were reviewed as part of the annual audits of Members' expenses would have been subject to the same audit process as other OCE payments included in the random sample i.e. they would have been tested for compliance with the relevant administrative rules.

Fieldwork would involve the examination of records held by the Finance Office including claims made by Members, supporting information, and payments made on foot of the claims.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the information provided in response to AQW 44835/11-15.

(AQW 54936/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Further to AQW 44835/11-15, from April 2015 to the end of February 2016, 652 rolls of mints have been provided in the Assembly Chamber at a cost of £358.60.

Mrs Hale asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the events held by the Assembly to mark International Women's Day and Assembly Women's Week.

(AQO 9902/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Assembly Women's Week was an initiative brought forward by the Speaker to not only mark International Women's Day but to also end the mandate of this Assembly with a positive focus on improving female representation in the Assembly and public life generally.

The programme generally had a theme of supporting women to put themselves forward and highlighting examples of female achievement but built on many of the issues identified by last year's report on "Women in Politics" produced by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.

There was a high level of interest in the varied range of events with approximately 900 people participating in Assembly Women's Week. It certainly helped to again generate public debate about the participation of women in our society.

Assembly Women's Week did come at a very busy time in the life of this Assembly and on behalf of the Speaker and the Assembly Commission I would want to record our thanks to all those who were involved in delivering it.

Assembly Women's Week Programme

Theme – Supporting Participation & Increasing Representation

Monday 7 – Friday 11 March 2016

	Event	Estimated Cost	Attendees
Monday 7th	<p>Facing the Challenge, Leading the Way</p> <p>Brought together three female figures who have played leading roles in some of the most challenging areas of recent Northern Ireland society and politics to discuss their experiences, female leadership, obstacles women face and how they overcame them. Hosted by broadcaster Tracey Magee, the panel included Eileen Evason CBE, Emeritus Professor in Social Administration and author of numerous publications relating to poverty, social security and gender, Judith Gillespie CBE, Former Deputy Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Kathryn Stone OBE, Chief Legal Ombudsman for England and Wales and previously Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland.</p>	£1000	100 - general public

	Event	Estimated Cost	Attendees
Tuesday 8th	<p>Launch of Women's Parliamentary Caucus</p> <p>On 9 March 2015, the Assembly approved the Assembly & Executive Review Committee's (AERC) report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly which included a recommendation that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women's caucus.</p> <p>Purpose: "A united Women's Assembly Caucus, working together irrespective of political party affiliation, to ensure equality for all; to provide an opportunity for women to exchange and ensure there is cross-party collaboration on ideas; to form collective platforms on particular policies and actions, and; to support one another on issues and areas of common concern".</p>	<p>£450</p> <p>(costs covered by Politics Plus)</p>	<p>50 plus - all MLAs were invited as well as staff involved in supporting the formation of the Caucus</p>
	<p>Women on Board</p> <p>Hosted by the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust, Women on Board gave attendees the opportunity to put questions to experienced board members on the barriers and enablers that women face when taking up roles on boards in Northern Ireland. The event was chaired by Judena Leslie Commissioner for Public Appointments and panel members included NIABT Board Members, Robin Newton MLA NIABT Chair, Judith Cochrane MLA, Claire Sugden MLA, Nicola Bothwell NB Chartered Marketing, past NIABT Board Member Dr Joanne Stuart OBE NI Science Park and Strictly Boardroom's Eileen Mullan.</p>	<p>£750</p>	<p>76 – general public and students</p>
Wednesday 9th	<p>Lunch for existing and former female MLAs - Unveiling of Artwork.</p> <p>All 50 current and former MLAs since 1998 were invited by the Speaker to lunch. 32 attended and reflected on their experiences. At the event, an artwork by ceramicist Rachel Dickson was unveiled who has an interest in the representation of women in institutions and approached the Speaker as part of her research.</p>	<p>£500 - artwork</p> <p>£1000</p>	<p>Speaker, 30 current and former women MLAs</p>
	<p>Mindfulness Workshop</p> <p>This workshop, designed to improve mental health, introduced the skills to empower the participants to become more 'mindful'. The Workshop was advertised to all previous attendees of young Female Leaders Academy, all MLAs and party staff and current Women in Public Life programme participants.</p>	<p>£245</p> <p>(costs covered by Politics Plus)</p>	<p>16 places available</p>
	<p>Seen and Heard?</p> <p>'Seen and Heard' saw Margaret E Ward, well-known entrepreneur, journalist and broadcaster, host a debate with prominent representatives from the world of broadcasting to discuss under-representation of women as commentators in the media and how it can be addressed. Panel members included Kathleen Carragher, Head of News, BBC NI, Hilary McGouran, Managing Editor, TV News for RTE, Michael Wilson, Managing Director, UTV Television.</p>	<p>£3900</p>	<p>74 – General public</p>
Thursday 10th	<p>An Inclusive Commonwealth</p> <p>'An Inclusive Commonwealth' was the theme of Commonwealth Day 2016 and was part of Assembly Women's Week. Female representatives from Commonwealth regions spoke about the importance of inclusivity within Northern Ireland, and the role female leaders have to play. The event also showcased music, dance and culture from across the Commonwealth.</p>	<p>£3400</p>	<p>200 – General Public</p>

	Event	Estimated Cost	Attendees
Friday 11th	<p>Women in Public Life Programme Launch</p> <p>Following on from the success of our first intake of the 2015/16 Programme, Politics Plus launched the Women in Public Life 2016 Programme. Women in Public Life is an initiative aiming to address the imbalance found at a senior level in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and across public, regulatory, advisory and specialist bodies. The programme seeks to strengthen the role of women in political and public life and challenge many of the barriers to participation while building collaborative relationships between women. The programme is designed to ensure more women in decision-making roles and for women to develop the capacity to inform future policy reforms.</p>	£400 (costs covered by Politics Plus)	39 participants and support
	<p>‘Respect’ – A conversation with the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dr Helen Pankhurst</p> <p>This event provided students from local schools with the opportunity to hear about the Speaker’s ‘Respect’ agenda and to pose questions to the Speaker and Dr Helen Pankhurst on the importance of equality and participation.</p>	£250	60 school students
	<p>Dinner with Helen Pankhurst</p> <p>The dinner provided an opportunity for MLAs sitting on the Speaker’s Reference Group and Steering Group of the Women’s Caucus, to discuss Helen Pankhurst’s work and issues of gender.</p>	£150 (costs covered by Politics Plus)	14 MLAs and officials
	<p>Know your Power</p> <p>A screening of ‘Suffragette’ followed by a conversation with Dr Helen Pankhurst, great grand-daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst. The award winning film ‘Suffragette’ tracked the story of the women who played an important role in the early feminist movement. Dr Helen Pankhurst has continued the legacy set by her activist great-grandmother by campaigning for various women’s issues both in the UK and abroad. BBC broadcaster Wendy Austin hosted a conversation with Helen, looking at how women can “understand their power” and the real effects they can have on society by voting and taking a leading role in public life.</p>	£1,800	250 – general public
	Av For All Events	£2,200	
	Total	NI Assembly: £ 14,800 Politics Plus: £1,245	900 people

Mr McCausland asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the sales revenue of the Assembly gift shop. (AQO 9908/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Gift shop, situated off the entrance foyer of Parliament Buildings provides a range of retail goods for sale as well as food and beverages to all building users including the public. It is also home of the Assembly’s Post Office and Designer Maker Initiative which promotes local crafters. The overall sales revenue for the current mandate is as follows:

- 2011 £69,306.67
- 2012 £63,915.15
- 2013 £59,824.10
- 2014 £53,124.31
- 2015 £50,861.63
- 2016 (Jan & Feb) £6,910.23

The Gift shop sales revenue is dependent on the number of people visiting Parliament Buildings. The number of visitors to Parliament Buildings has decreased over the last 5 years due to a gradual decline in the number of functions and tours being hosted in Parliament Buildings and the wider economic downturn.

Mr Hussey asked the Assembly Commission how many secretariat staff have been disciplined in respect of alleged contraventions of its Social Media Policy.

(AQO 9905/11-16)

Mrs McKeivitt (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): While the Assembly Commission does not make any public comment on personnel matters and especially when those matters are on-going, I can confirm that one member of Assembly Commission staff is currently suspended as part of a disciplinary process involving the alleged misuse of the Commission's Social Media Policy. I can also confirm that following appropriate investigations under the Commission's Disciplinary Procedures, three members of staff have been disciplined in respect to breaches of the Social Media Policy.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 25 March 2016

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Murphy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how much their (a) Department; and (b) its arm's-length bodies has spent on energy bills in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54165/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and its current operating arm's-length bodies which are outside the Department's accounting boundary (NDPBs) incurred the following energy costs:

	2011-12 (£)	2012-13 (£)	2013-14 (£)	2014-15 (£)	To 31.12.15 (£)
OFMDFM	208,164	195,804	212,264	174,620	114,501
NDPBs	172,693	223,662	269,909	245,314	135,899

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding their Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54749/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The information held centrally on the financial accounting system does not break EU expenditure down to the level asked in this question.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will release the Sexual Orientation Strategy for phase 2 public consultation prior to dissolution.

(AQW 54768/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: We remain committed to producing a Sexual Orientation Strategy and to achieve this commitment we agreed a two phased consultation process.

Phase one of this process was successfully completed and the responses were used to inform the content of a draft Strategy.

A project team was established to oversee the development of the Sexual Orientation Equality Strategy, including the consultation process.

A final draft consultation document is currently under consideration and it is hoped Phase two of the consultation will commence shortly.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in reference to the Investigating Links in Attainment and Deprivation Report, to detail (i) the terms of reference ; (ii) the cost of production; (iii) the findings; (iv) why the research study which commenced in Spring 2012 has not been published; and (v) the publication date.

(AQW 54789/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: As a successful applicant to the 2011 OFMDFM open call for research, the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD) study, which aims to understand the reasons for differing educational achievement within and between deprived areas through an in-depth qualitative multifaceted case study approach, was awarded £290,563.

The research has delivered six (of seven) stages including individual case study reports on each target area. This has allowed payments of £244,049 to issue so far.

The study was designed as a three year field study, commencing in Spring 2012, and has involved a wide range of in-depth case studies in local areas to develop a better insight into the factors contributing to educational achievement. The three year research phase completed during Spring 2015 and work has since been ongoing to complete the final report. The QUB

research team provided a draft final report in December 2015 which requires further work prior to further consideration by the project's advisory group.

It is anticipated that the report will publish in Spring 2016, subject to final sign off by the advisory group.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the organisations that have been supported by the Social Investment Fund in North Down.

(AQW 54862/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund is not designed to support specific organisations but rather to support investment in local communities which will benefit local people most in need. Three projects in the South Eastern Social Investment Zone will benefit residents of North Down. These are the Community Houses project, the Community Operated Sports project and the zone wide Transitions project which will be managed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust respectively.

The Community Houses project with associated cost of around £325,000 is intended to support capital works to a range of community houses and includes 5 houses in North Down. These are:

- 189 Ballyree Drive, Bloomfield (Bangor);
- 32 South Avenue, Whitehill (Bangor);
- 2 Kilcooley Square (Bangor);
- 26 Rathgill Park, Rathgill (Bangor); and
- 21 Breezemount Park, Breezemount (Bangor).

Good progress has been made on scoping the scale and costs of potential works to support the finalisation of the economic appraisal. A letter of offer will be dependent on securing the associated approvals but we are working to progress this as quickly as possible.

The Community Operated Sports project with associated costs of almost £2million has recently secured approval and officials are working to address associated conditions, with a view to issuing a letter of offer.

The £2.6million Early Intervention – Transitions project is a zone wide project which aims to give young people and their parents the opportunity to improve their relationships, build confidence and self-esteem. The project is being delivered in North Down and Ards by a local consortium led by Barnardo's. It is currently operational and providing vital opportunities for local people.

The Social Investment Fund is a growing success story. It is at the heart of the Executive's Delivering Social Change Framework making life changing differences to people and communities facing disadvantage. SIF has over £61 million committed to projects across the nine zones; 25 projects worth £37 million commenced; and 10 projects operational with a steady pipeline of others to follow.

Mr McQuillan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they plan to attend any events commemorating the centenary of the Battle of the Somme.

(AQO 9725/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Any invitations to events to commemorate the Battle of the Somme will be fully considered by us.

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much of the PEACE III Programme was spent in South Down in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55191/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The information held centrally on the financial accounting system does not break Peace III expenditure down to the level asked in this question.

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much of the PEACE IV Programme is projected to be spent in South Down in the next three years.

(AQW 55192/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The EU Peace IV Programme was formally adopted by the European Commission on 30 November 2015. The eligible area for this cross-border programme consists of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal.

Peace IV has been allocated €229m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a further €40m in match funding being provided by the two member states. OFMDFM is an accountable department for parts of three of the four thematic objectives of the Peace IV Programme, including the local authority action plans, the regional element of Building Positive Relations and the provision of services for victims and survivors. The overall budget for these elements is €115.2m with OFMDFM responsible for €90.3m of this allocation (€76.7m ERDF and €25.6m in match funding).

The first call for applications was made by the Special EU Programmes Body on 3 March 2016, so at this stage it is not possible to state how much will be spent in South Down.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the intended use of the entire Shackleton site at Ballykelly; and (ii) whether plans for its future use are now complete.

(AQW 55199/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM has agreed to sell approximately 621.5 acres of the Shackleton site to the MJM Group. MJM's plans for Shackleton include a private jet and rail carriage fit out facility, renewable energy and the company's own IT service centre and facilities management services. MJM has also indicated that it would accommodate other business proposals from interested parties in order to fully exploit the site and maximise job creation opportunities.

A key aspect of MJM's proposal was its commitment to providing significant community benefits, including a refurbished community building and outdoor recreation facilities.

The remainder of the site will be developed by NI Water (approximately 86 acres of the site), for an Integrated Constructed Wetlands and by DARD (approximately 8.5 acres of the site), for its new Head Quarters.

Mr McAleer asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on a child rights indicators framework.

(AQO 9789/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: The aim of the Child Rights Indicator Framework is to develop a set of outcome indicators which can be used at a strategic level to measure and monitor the Executive's progress on effectiveness and achievement against the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

The Child Rights Indicator Framework is by its nature a 'living' mechanism and an ambitious undertaking which has few, if any precedents internationally. It is proposed that the indicators which have been developed to date will be used to measure and report progress and further work is to be undertaken to identify additional measurable indicators.

These Child Rights indicators are not separate, but integral to the development of the new Children and Young People's strategy and will provide a clear and practical alignment between achievement of the outcomes set out in the Strategy and the measurement of improved compliance with delivery on children's rights.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Signature Programme on Play and Leisure announced in October 2013 including, (a) how much of the £1.6m has been spent; (ii) how much has been allocated; (ii) what bodies or organisations received funding; and (vi) who benefited from this programme.

(AQW 55292/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: We are fully committed to supporting play and leisure opportunities as a medium for the improved wellbeing and development of our children and young people.

In October 2013, Junior Ministers announced the potential investment of up to £1.6 million to enhance play and leisure opportunities for children and young people. Officials worked with external stakeholders to consider the key outcomes for the programme and the actions that could be taken utilizing the proposed budget. The high level outcomes developed were that every child would play more; that every adult would encourage and value play more; and that every community would actively support play more. Unfortunately, given wider budgetary constraints and the pressures on the existing DSC programmes the play and leisure programme could not be prioritised in DSC funding in either 2014/15 or 2015/16. Funding of 20k was secured late in year in 2014/15 and provided to DOE and the NI Environment Agency for an initial project of a natural play facility at Crawfordsburn Country Park which was developed with local school children in the area.

Given that it was not possible to allocate the programme a dedicated budget as originally intended an approach was taken to embed play within existing relevant policies, programmes or strategies, to the mutual benefit of both. Embedding play within relevant policies and programmes has resulted in over £8million in play and leisure projects through the Social Investment Fund, including a project investing over £2.5 million in new high quality play provision in the Derry Council area at Ballymagroarty Play Park, Kilfennan Valley Park, Ballyarnett Country Park and Brandywell. The sustainability and creation of Childcare places and the successful summer camps programme reaching 4000 children have included play activities.

In addition, a range of potential actions have been developed that could be taken forward as and when funding becomes available. Work is also continuing on the development of the new Executive Strategy for Children and Young People. The enjoyment of play and leisure is a key aspect of a child's well-being and therefore this Strategy will consider the actions that could be taken to secure positive outcomes in this area.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of staff in the Executive information Service, broken down by grade, in each year since 2007.

(AQW 55421/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Details for the Department for Regional Development are shown in the table below. Records are available from 2008.

Year	PIO	SIO	IO	AIO
2007	-	-	-	-

Year	PIO	SIO	IO	AIO
2008	1	2	0	1
2009	1	2	0	1
2010	1	2	0	1
2011	1	2	0	1
2012	1	2	1	1
2013	1	2	2	0
2014	1	2	1	0
2015	1	2	0	0

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the cost of the Executive Information Service, in each year since 2007.

(AQW 55422/11-16)

Mrs Foster and Mr M McGuinness: Details for the Department for Regional Development are shown in the table below. Salary records are only available from November 2008.

Year	Total Cost £
2007	-
2008	21,515
2009	143,940
2010	141,898
2011	149,971
2012	164,094
2013	201,924
2014	170,696
2015	143,278

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding was paid under the Common Agriculture Policy Pillar I Direct Payments in South Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55114/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The amount of Common Agriculture Policy Pillar I Payments in South Down in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below:-

Year	Pillar I Scheme	Value of SFP payments for South Down (€)
2011	Single Farm Payment	25,891,651
2012	Single Farm Payment	27,939,200
2013	Single Farm Payment	28,805,386
2014	Single Farm Payment	27,826,712
2015	Direct Payment*	26,076,590

* Direct payments include Basic Payment, Greening and Young Farmers' Payment.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has made any arrangements to visit Clady, that was adversely impacted by the recent flooding.

(AQW 55184/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of the distress suffered by residents and business owners in Clady as a result of the most recent phase of flooding.

I launched a flood protection scheme in January which provides grant aid for domestic and non-domestic properties who wish to make their homes and businesses more resilient to any future flooding events.

I am also pleased to have secured Executive support for an emergency relief scheme which will provide a one-off hardship payment to non-domestic properties which were significantly impacted by recent flooding.

I have visited the homes and properties of many people who have been affected and it is also my intention to visit Clady.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding her Department receives from Europe.

(AQW 55245/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development received £300m from Europe during the 2014/15 Financial Year which is the latest year of audited accounts.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how many; and (ii) what proportion of (a) Basic; (b) Greening; and (c) Young Farmer applicants, were selected for (i) random; or (ii) other inspection; and when these applicants can expect to receive payment.

(AQW 55261/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: EU legislation requires that inspections are selected as detailed below:-

Selection	% selected randomly	% selected by risk	Number of Cases
Basic Payment Scheme	5	0	1332
Positive Greening Requirements	1.25	3.75	129
Permanent Grassland Sensitive	0	5	84
Ecological Focus Areas	0	5	50
Young Farmer	5	0	98
Greening Exemption	0	3	722
Areas of Natural Constraint	1.25	3.75	498
Cross Compliance	0.25 of BPS/non BPS population	0.75 of BPS/non BPS population	273

To date 23,249 farm businesses have demonstrated eligibility for the Basic Payment Scheme and have received payment, which represents 98% of applicants.

All efforts are being made to finalise the 7 remaining inspection cases as soon as possible.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) how many; and (ii) what proportion of (a) Basic; (b) Greening; and (c) Young Farmer payments, have been issued in each month since December 2015; and how many remain outstanding.

(AQW 55262/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of payments for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), the Greening Payment and Young Farmers' Payment (YFP) that have issued each month since December 2015 are detailed in the below:-

Payment	December 2015 95%	January 2016 96%	February 2016 97%	March 2016 98%	Total
BPS	20,924	971	730	540	23,165
Greening Payment	20,992	977	735	495	23,199
YFP	1,126	161	191	81	1,559

To date 23,292 farm businesses have demonstrated eligibility for BPS. 78 Young Farmer applications are outstanding. My officials are working to finalise the remaining claims as quickly as possible.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much (i) her Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55319/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development spent a total of £723,000 on consultants from 2011/12 to 2014/15. This is broken down in the table over leaf.

Spend on Consultants 2011-2015

Organisation	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	3	205	66	392	666
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute	11	14	14	0	39
NI Fishery Harbour Authority	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission	0	0	0	0	0
Livestock and Meat Commission	0	0	15	3	18
Total	14	219	95	395	723

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much her Department has spent on (i) equality impact assessments; and (ii) consultations in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55321/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: A breakdown of spend on (i) equality impact assessments and (ii) consultations by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in each of the last three years is detailed in the table below.

Spend	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	Total £
Equality Impact Assessments	0	2,658	785	3,443
Consultations	17,785	10,420	6,665	34,870
Total	17,785	13,078	7,450	38,313

The Section 75 statutory duties make equality and good relations central to the whole range of public policy decision making. As such the cost of carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and consultations are not normally maintained separately and may not be readily disaggregated. Where possible the direct costs for EQIAs and consultations have been provided. The attached figures exclude staff costs as the Department does not separately hold staff costs associated with EQIAs and consultations. Additionally, interactions with stakeholders are often via the website or by email which typically incur no direct costs.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the availability of courses to gain the Certificate in Competence in pesticide use; and how much these courses cost.

(AQW 55325/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Within the north of Ireland there is a network of providers which issue Certificates of Competence in Pesticide Use on behalf of the awarding bodies City and Guilds and Lantra. Each provider sets their own course costs.

Details of the City and Guilds approved centres are available on www.nptc.org.uk (under Qualifications).

Details of the Lantra approved instructors/assessors to deliver and assess their training courses/qualifications are available on www.lantra.co.uk (under Training & Qualifications)

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support is available for farmers that own land which has been under water for a number of weeks and that are seeking financial support to help re-seed the affected land.

(AQW 55326/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: On 10 March 2016 I announced an emergency financial aid package which will provide £1,000 to help non-domestic organisations impacted by the recent exceptional flooding. This one-off programme, which will be operated by local councils, will assist farm businesses who have suffered severe inconvenience as a result of this flooding.

The scheme will be open for applications from 4 to 30 April. Further guidance and application forms will be available on the council websites from 4 April.

To be eligible for this financial assistance there is a range of criteria that must be satisfied:

- i) The claim is eligible where a loss incurred was not insurable;
- ii) Only small businesses can apply (employing less than 25 people);
- iii) Farm businesses will include farmyards and land farmed by the business;
- iv) Farmland must have been underwater for at least 14 days and incurred additional cost due to reduced productivity or unplanned sward restoration / reseeding work;
- v) Businesses must have been unable to operate due to constrained access for at least 14 days; and
- vi) Businesses must be able to demonstrate a remedial cost to the business of at least £1,000.

Only farmers whose land farmed has been significantly affected as a result of sustained high levels in Lough Neagh and Lough Erne will be considered. It is planned to define and publish a list of eligible areas ahead of scheme opening.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what laws deal with dog attacks on cats.
(AQW 55328/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: A Dog control here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, which as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 to include a number of new provisions. These include an offence of setting a dog on any other animal (including cats) owned by another person, which on summary conviction can lead to a fine not exceeding £2,500; and allowing a dog to attack and injure any other animal (including cats) owned by another person, which on summary conviction can lead to a fine not exceeding £1,000. Prior to these provisions, which came into operation on 28 July 2011, it was not an offence to allow a dog to attack and injure an animal, excluding livestock, owned by another person.

In addition, the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) protects the welfare of companion animals such as cats and dogs. A person found guilty of an offence of causing unnecessary suffering is liable to a maximum sentence on conviction on indictment of up to 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, or on summary conviction of up to 6 months imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine.

The Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the 2011 Act, which was published on 29 February 2016, recommended that the maximum sentences are increased to 5 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine upon conviction on indictment, and for the more serious summary offences, to 12 months imprisonment and/or a £20,000 fine. These amendments to the 2011 Act are being taken forward in the Justice (No. 2) Bill. A copy of the Final Report of the Review can be found at the following link, which was circulated to all MLAs in advance of its launch on 29 February 2016: www.dardni.gov.uk/publications/review-implementation-welfare-animals-act-ni-2011.

I trust you will find this helpful.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether evidence exists of ivy growing on a tree posing a risk to the health of that tree; and if so, what action is being taken or recommended.
(AQW 55355/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Ivy is not a risk to the health of trees in general unless the tree is already in a state of decline.

Ivy is not a parasitic plant and therefore does not directly affect the health of the tree it climbs. The ivy's feeding roots obtain nutrient and water from the soil and by means of fine "attachment roots" it clings to a tree or other surface. The "attachment roots" are not used for feeding and only penetrate the outer layer of bark or other surface to obtain anchorage.

Vigorous ivy growth can compete with a tree, particularly for light and can affect the stability of individual branches or the whole tree making it more prone to suffer breakage particularly in strong wind. However heavy ivy growth in the crown of a tree is usually an indication that the tree is in a state of decline already, as most healthy tree canopies will let insufficient light through for vigorous ivy growth.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what investment her Department has overseen in South Antrim since 2011.
(AQW 55376/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill:

DARD Investment in South Antrim Constituency

Programme / Scheme	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Single Farm Payment	13,259	11,822	14,250	12,142	51,473
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 1 - to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry industries	279	29	419	221	948

Programme / Scheme	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 2 - to provide support to farmers who manage their land for positive environmental benefit	890	781	821	703	3,195
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 3 - to improve the rural economy and the quality of life in rural areas.	785	811	1,201	1,767	4,564
Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation	69	164	158	176	567
NI Regional Food Programme	0	0	0	4	4
Drainage and Flood Alleviation	136	182	328	48	694
Rural Development Programme - New Entrants Scheme	19	14	8	6	47
Forestry Grant Schemes	128	106	111	93	438
Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance (LFA)	819	694	756	849	3,118
Extension and refurbishment of DARD Office Estate	578	772	602	451	2,403
European Fisheries Fund	93	144	172	206	615
Total	17,055	15,519	18,826	16,666	68,066

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has invested a total of £68,066,000 in the South Antrim Constituency from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015. This is broken down in the table overleaf

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what investment her Department has overseen in Upper Bann since 2011.

(AQW 55383/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has invested a total of £39,460,000 in the Upper Bann Constituency from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015. This is broken down in the table overleaf.

DARD Investment in Upper Bann Constituency

Programme / Scheme	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Single Farm Payment	8,061	7,681	8,098	7,210	31,050
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 1 - to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry industries	595	520	356	409	1,880
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 2 - to provide support to farmers who manage their land for positive environmental benefit	520	472	473	404	1,869
NI Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Axis 3 - to improve the rural economy and the quality of life in rural areas.	365	603	690	1,587	3,245
Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation	100	202	132	108	542
NI Regional Food Programme	0	0	2	4	6
Drainage and Flood Alleviation	6	0	0	0	6
Rural Development Programme - New Entrants Scheme	12	6	3	0	21
Forestry Grant Schemes	5	13	50	11	79

Programme / Scheme	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	Total £'000
Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance (LFA)	2	1	3	1	7
Extension and Refurbishment of DARD Office Estate	49	166	87	131	433
Biomass Processing Challenge	0	126	0	196	322
Total	9,715	9,790	9,894	10,061	39,460

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what EU funding has been surrendered by her Department in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 55399/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: EU funding is only drawn down when claims have been verified and payments are ready to be made to recipients. Therefore a surplus does not arise and no EU funding has been surrendered by my Department in each of the last two financial years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what annual funding her Department awards to the Woodland Trust.

(AQW 55400/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Forest Service paid £111,000 of Rural Development Programme grant aid to Woodland Trust in the period 2009/10 to 2014/15. This grant aid was paid to create 35 hectares of new woodland and maintain existing woodlands under the Departments Forestry Grant Scheme. Forest Service does not award other annual funding to support the Trust.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much annual funding her Department provides to the Woodland Trust.

(AQW 55516/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: Forest Service paid £111,000 of Rural Development Programme grant aid to Woodland Trust in the period 2009/10 to 2014/15. This grant aid was paid to create 35 hectares of new woodland and maintain existing woodlands under the Departments Forestry Grant Scheme. Forest Service does not award other annual funding to support the Trust.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the impact that the BSE crisis had on payments from the Suckler Cow Premium Scheme, including whether it was appropriate for the Department to make payments, and the number of payments made during this period.

(AQW 55570/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: During the BSE crisis, suckler cows remained eligible for the Suckler Cow Premium Scheme provided they complied with scheme conditions which were set by EU Regulations. It was therefore appropriate for the Department to make these payments and the BSE crisis had no significant impact on the number of payments made.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the areas categorised as being at risk from coastal flooding.

(AQW 55630/11-16)

Mrs O'Neill: The flood assessments, undertaken as part of the EU Floods Directive, have identified Belfast, Derry and Newry at significant risk of coastal flooding. Other Areas at risk, albeit to a lesser extent, include Downpatrick and Newtownards.

Rivers Agency has developed an interactive map-viewer 'Flood Maps (NI)' that enables the public to access the latest flood hazard information available from government. The viewer highlights the areas throughout the north of Ireland that are prone to flooding and its potential adverse impacts.

Potential measures identified to manage the risk of coastal flooding are detailed in the Flood Risk Management Plans, developed as a further requirement of the EU Floods Directive. These plans were published on 22 December 2015 and can be found at www.dardni.gov.uk/publications/flood-risk-management-plans.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of her Department's spend in Fermanagh in each year since 2010.

(AQW 54745/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department's total spend in Fermanagh since 2010 was £13,894,854 and is summarised in the table below:

Area	Resource / Capital	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Fermanagh	Resource	1,723,380	1,758,980	1,706,415	1,689,800	1,502,843	1,533,176
	Capital	1,120,235	832,626	84,319	1,350,484	318,081	274,515

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much her Department has spent on (i) equality impact assessments; and (ii) consultations in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55320/11-16)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information you have asked for is set out in the table below.

Year	Cost (£)
2012-13	23,342
2013-14	3,772
2014-15	12,164

Department of Education

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Education to detail the implications of an EU exit on his Department; and what preparations his Department has made for an EU exit.

(AQW 55056/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I do not support exiting the EU. No assessment of exiting the EU has been conducted by my department to date.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55090/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Over the last ten years, my Department has received funding from the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in NI and the Border Region of Northern Ireland (Peace II) and the NI Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP).

Under EU regulations, the document retention period for a number of funding streams (measures) has now lapsed and the information is therefore not available to identify spend in Foyle for these measures.

For the remaining 2 measures under Peace II, for which the document retention period had not lapsed or has just lapsed at the date of this question being asked, information is set out below.

- (i) Measure 2.2 – Developing Children and Young People, recognised schools and the youth sector as having a crucial role to play in promoting the social inclusion of young people and helping them to build peace and reconciliation.

Under this measure, over 140 projects were supported initially with a further 65 projects supported under an Extension. A number of these projects worked across the North of Ireland and it has not been possible to identify specific spend in Foyle. Of the remaining projects, the following spend was incurred directly in Foyle over the period of the project:

Organisation	Total spend identified in Foyle (Includes EU and Departmental matched spend) £'000
North-West Centre for Learning and Development	106
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	112
Off the Streets Community Youth Initiative	91
Tullyally & District Development Group Ltd	43
Holywell Trust	120
St. Joseph's Boys' School (Creggan area)	135
WELB Youth Service – Axis Project	83

Organisation	Total spend identified in Foyle (Includes EU and Departmental matched spend) £'000
WELB - Alternative Education Support of Pupils - AESOP North	123
FOSEC: Foyle Skills And Education Cluster	133
Creggan Country Park Enterprises Limited	99
Western Education & Library Board	108
WELB - AXIS Project (Peace II extension)	60
Greater Shantallow Area Partnership - Youth Essential Skills Support Programme	166
Creggan Country Parks - New start Creggan	97
WELB - AESOP North (Peace II extension)	111
R.E.A.C.H Across	124
North West Centre for Learning & Development (Peace II extension)	119
Off the Streets (Peace II extension)	138
Total	1,968

Note: Table may not add due to roundings

- (ii) Measure 5.5 was implemented jointly by my Department and the Department of Education and Science (DES) in Dublin. Measure 5.5 brought into being cross-border partnerships between a wide variety of organisations that otherwise would not have occurred.

A total of 14 projects were funded under this measure and approximately 15,670 direct beneficiaries participated with a further 1,627 indirect beneficiaries. It has been identified that the following projects were operational in the Foyle area, but a breakdown of specific costs is not available:

- The Bytes Cross Border Project was based in Derry and Inishowen, Co. Donegal and targeted 16-25 year olds from both areas. Its main aim was to enhance the ICT skills of the young people participating. Cultural visits also took place at the Tower Museum in Derry.
- The Young People on the Move project included participants from the Galliagh Region in Derry. The Galliagh Group participated with other target groups in producing a short film which was presented to their local communities.
- The Lifelong Learning Through Sport Project target areas were the county of Donegal, the City of Derry and the district of Strabane. Target groups were brought together for cross-border exchange visits and residential courses, based around sport. The sporting activities would enable young people of school age to get to know, play and socialise with those of a different religious denomination, and gain knowledge of each other's sports and culture. Adult coaches in each location would undergo a programme of training and acquire a recognised sports coaching qualification. The project had approximately 5,877 participants which included 800 adults trained as coaches.

Of the remaining projects in this Measure, it is not possible to identify the amount of spend specifically in Foyle.

Under BSP, Measure 2.4, Improving Opportunities for Lifelong Learning, one project was funded – the Sustaining Engagement at Learning (SEAL) project, which related to the activities of the Education Welfare Service in each of the then Education and Library Boards. Spend on this project was incurred between January 2004 to June 2007 and was primarily staffing related and was not directly attributable to specific schools on the finance system. Therefore it is not possible to provide details of spend in Foyle on this measure.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of days lost due to staff sickness among staff in the General Teaching Council, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55168/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand from the General Teaching Council that the number of days lost due to staff sickness in each of the last three years is as follows:

Financial Year	Total number of days lost due to sickness
2013-14	399
2014-15	80.5

Financial Year	Total number of days lost due to sickness
2015-16 (to 28.02.16)	479

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail the attendance record of the 33 members of the General Teaching Council in (a) 2014; and (b) 2015.

(AQW 55169/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council has advised me that the attendance record of its members at Council meetings in 2014 and 2015 is set out in the table below:

Name	2014 No. meetings attended	2015 No. meetings attended
G Agnew	4(4)	4(4)
A Andrews	3(4)	4(4)
I Arbuthnot	4(4)	3(4)
R Barton	3(4)	0(4)
S Beattie	1(4)	4(4)
D Canning	4(4)	4(4)
B Carlin	4(4)	2(4)
J Colgan	3(4)	2(3)
J Cornyn	2(4)	4(4)
S Crea	2(4)	0(2)
M Crudden	n/a	3(4)
C Cumper	2(4)	3(4)
A Curry	2(4)	3(3)
C Davis	4(4)	0(1)
J Devlin	4(4)	3(3)
F Donnelly	3(4)	1(1)
G Dunlop	4(4)	2(4)
T Graham	4(4)	3(3)
S Douglas	4(4)	3(4)
D Hardy	0(1)	n/a
B Jess	2(4)	4(4)
S Lambe	2(4)	2(4)
J Kerr	0(4)	1(4)
C McAllister	1(2)	1(2)
C McCay	3(4)	3(4)
C McCartan	2(2)	3(4)
S McKee	3(4)	2(4)
D Mules	3(4)	2(3)
B Mulholland	3(4)	3(3)
T Murphy	2(4)	n/a
J Pollock	4(4)	4(4)
R Rainey	4(4)	4(4)
G Scott	1(4)	2(3)

Name	2014 No. meetings attended	2015 No. meetings attended
I Simons	4(4)	3(4)
C Scott-Wills	n/a	2(3)
D Cargo	n/a	1(1)
M Hagan	n/a	1(1)
P McAllister	n/a	1(1)
L O'Prey	n/a	1(1)
P O'Doherty	n/a	0(1)
M Culbert	n/a	0(1)
M Lou-Winchborne	n/a	0(1)

Notes:

- 1 Figures in brackets represent the maximum number of meetings a particular individual could attend.
- 2 Figures reflect changes in in-year membership.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has taken any steps to increase safety and mitigate risks to both pupils and staff where schools grounds immediately border a road with a (i) 30mph; (ii) 40mph; or (iii) national speed limit.

(AQW 55182/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I can advise that if a road safety matter is referred to the Department by a school that the matter will be considered and where possible a minor works solution implemented. Such solutions may involve providing additional car parking and reconfiguring space within school grounds to enable turning circles to be provided or delegating areas as drop off /pick up points.

If a minor works solution is not possible within the school grounds the Department will work with the school and Transport NI to request reduced speed limits in the immediate school area and request suitable signage.

New Build Schools

When the Department is considering potential sites for a new school build, the ability to secure a safe route and access to the school is one of the key criteria. Throughout the planning and design process the Department and/or the appointed Project Management Team will actively engage with Transport NI in respect of all Health and Safety requirements including the potential to reduce current speed limits and improve the length of sightlines where possible. This will often entail the completion and submission of a Traffic Assessment Form. Any subsequent conditions imposed in the final Planning Permission will be implemented as part of the scheme to ensure there is a satisfactory means of access in the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.

Other Road Safety Measures

The Education Authority may provide a School Crossing Patrol in accordance with Road Safety GB guidelines. An assessment of need will primarily focus on the volume of pupils walking to and from school and the number of vehicles at the location under an assessment; however it may include other factors such as speed/visibility, carriageway width, road markings, junctions, accident history, street lighting and signage.

I would also advise that teachers have ready access to the resources needed to help in the planning and teaching of road safety education through the C2k exchange. These include multi-media presentations, lesson plans, videos and worksheets which can be tailored to suit their teaching requirements. There are opportunities throughout the curriculum for teachers to cover the issue of road safety. For example, at primary level the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning requires teachers to enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in keeping themselves healthy and safe.

At post-primary level the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning requires that pupils should have opportunities to "develop preventative strategies in relation to accidents in the home, school and on the road".

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what research has his Department conducted into the risks that exist when school grounds immediately border a road; and where no crash barriers or natural collision constraints exist between the road and the school grounds.

(AQW 55183/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Issues affecting roads outside school grounds fall within the remit of Transport NI and therefore the Department of Education would not carry out such research.

I can however advise that when the Department is considering potential sites for a new school build, the ability to secure a safe route and access to the school is one of the key criteria. Throughout the planning and design process the Department and/or the appointed Project Management Team will actively engage with Transport NI in respect of all Health and Safety requirements including the potential to reduce current speed limits and improve the length of sightlines where possible. This will often entail the completion and submission of a Traffic Assessment Form. Any subsequent conditions imposed in the final Planning Permission will be implemented as part of the scheme to ensure there is a satisfactory means of access in the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Education what investment his Department has overseen in Newry and Armagh since 2011. (AQW 55229/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the Newry and Armagh constituency in each complete financial year since 2011:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	87,569	88,036	89,238	94,857
Capital	7,535	4,545	6,968	14,103
Total	95,104	92,581	96,206	108,960

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Home to School Transport policy. (AQW 55237/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Home to School Transport policy remains unchanged and continues to support the travel to school of nearly 90,000 pupils every day.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the position of foster carers in relation to the provision of education for young people in their care.

(AQW 55247/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The introduction of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in 2011 facilitated the provision for all parties involved in the care of Looked After Children, including Foster Carers, to contribute to the educational element of the formal Looked After Children (LAC) review.

Since 2014, schools receive an additional factor through the Common Funding Formula for each Looked After Child within their school.

As you are aware the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety is responsible for all other aspects of delegated authority to foster carers.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) when the final decision was made to reduce hours for nursery and pre-school children with special educational needs; and (ii) whether each of the 39 special education schools in Northern Ireland were notified of the final decision.

(AQW 55282/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In June 2015, the Education Authority agreed to move to a consistent provision of part time pre-school places for all special schools from September 2016. At that time, part time provision was already in place in 15 of the 29 special schools offering pre-school places. Special school principals were informed of the decision in October 2015.

Given the current level of concerns and what I consider to be a lack of proper consultation by the Authority with parents and schools on this matter, I have instructed the EA to undertake a review before making a final decision on pre-school provision in special schools.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact reducing nursery and pre-school hours for children with learning disabilities will have on access to (i) occupational therapy; (ii) physiotherapy; (iii) speech and language therapy; (iv) cognitive and behavioural development; and (v) skills development.

(AQW 55289/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: As the member is aware, I have instructed the EA to formally revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision in special schools. Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, all such matters you have raised need to be fully assessed.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what guidance or instructions have been given by his Department to the Education Authority on the amount of time provided for nursery or pre-school provision for children with special educational needs.
(AQW 55296/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: SEN provision is based on the individual needs of the child. Where a child has a Statement of SEN, the Statement identifies all of the child's SEN and the provision required to meet those needs must be put in place. It is a matter for the EA to determine that a child is appropriately placed in a setting that meets their individual requirements as identified in their Statement of SEN.

I have issued a clear instruction to the EA to urgently revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision for children in special schools. Before reaching a final decision on how pre-school provision in special schools should be designed and delivered, I have called on the EA to provide me with assurances that there has been full and open engagement with those most directly affected by any decision on pre-school provision in special schools and that they have been listened to. I have also emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail how much will be saved by moving all special educational needs pupils to part time pre-school or nursery provision
(AQW 55297/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority does not anticipate any financial savings. Should there be a move to consistent part time pre-school provision, this would increase the availability of places and therefore create additional costs relating to staffing and transport.

As the member is aware, I have instructed the EA to formally revisit its decision regarding pre-school provision in special schools, and I have emphasised that the overriding consideration must be how best to meet the needs of the children who will be accessing that provision.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of nursery or pre-school places in each special educational needs schools, broken down by (a) part time; and (b) full time places.
(AQW 55298/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The EA has advised that there are 29 special schools currently offering pre-school provision, 15 of which offer part time pre-school provision.

There is not a definitive number of pre-school places per special school, as the placement of children in a given year also considers the complexity of need and the intensity of support that would be required.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.
(AQW 55317/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: In accordance with guidelines set out by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), spend by my Department and its arm's length bodies, which is classified as external consultancy, is detailed in the table below.

The table outlines spend in respect of the financial years from 2011, namely 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. At this stage, final figures for 2015-16 are not available for inclusion in this response.

External firms may also be engaged by the Department and its arm's-length bodies for other areas of work which are not classified as external consultancy, in line with DFP guidance. Spend in respect of such activities is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

External consultancy spend breakdown from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015:-

	2011-12 £'s	2012-13 £'s	2013-14 £'s	2014-15 £'s
Department of Education	60,075	152,415	168,923	167,132
Belfast Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0
North Eastern Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0
South Eastern Education & Library Board*	9,000	0	0	0
Southern Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0
Western Education & Library Board*	450,000	6,927	61,630	0
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	0	0	0	0
Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment	6,476	0	0	0
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards*	0	0	0	0

	2011-12 £'s	2012-13 £'s	2013-14 £'s	2014-15 £'s
Council for Integrated Education	0	47,222	0	0
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	0	0	0	0
General Teaching Council	0	4,750	2,855	0
Middletown Centre for Autism	0	0	0	0
Youth Council	0	0	0	0

* bodies dissolved on 31 March 2015

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail how many positions that have been created at management level, including directors, in the Education Authority compared to the number in the Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 55356/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: It is intended that the Education Authority will have 25 senior managers: a Chief Executive; five Directors; 18 Assistant Directors; and a Head of Internal Audit and Assurance. This replaces a complement of 51 senior managers in the Education and Library Boards in 2014.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education when schools will be informed of the decision on whether or not they can continue with English exam board GCSE courses that would not be provided for by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

(AQW 55357/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department wrote to school principals on 19 January underlining my decision on GCSE grading. The letter acknowledged that there will be some subjects where there is not at present an alternative to the 9-1 specification and outlined how these will be dealt with.

I also commissioned guidance from CCEA, as the regulator here, on how to move forward with those small-entry subjects that would cease to be available. My decisions on this small number of subjects will be conveyed to schools by the CCEA Regulator in the coming weeks.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to detail what investment his Department has overseen in South Antrim since 2011.

(AQW 55377/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the South Antrim constituency in each complete financial year since 2011:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	56,178	54,884	56,340	56,644
Capital	1,285	1,804	2,956	6,851
Total	57,463	56,688	59,296	63,495

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Education what investment his Department has overseen in Upper Bann since 2011.

(AQW 55382/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the Upper Bann constituency in each complete financial year since 2011:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	77,641	78,799	80,943	82,894
Capital	7,967	4,370	5,297	12,726
Total	85,608	83,169	86,240	95,620

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many teachers have taken early retirement and then subsequently taken up temporary teaching positions in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55468/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of teachers who have taken early retirement and then subsequently taken up temporary teaching positions in each of the last three complete financial years are set out in the table below:-

Financial Year	Number of teachers
2012-13	54
2013-14	52
2014-15	51

These figures do not include Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the proportion of newly qualified teachers that have obtained a full-time permanent teaching post in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55469/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not hold the information requested in the format required. The General Teaching Council (GTCNI) collects information on teacher employment. The table below sets out the number of teachers, who qualified locally and registered with GTCNI in each of the years requested, whose employment is of a permanent or a significant temporary nature (ie. one term or more).

Year of Graduation	Graduates registered with the GTCNI	Graduates employed on a permanent or significant temporary basis
2013/14	469	273 (58%)
2014/15	467	222 (48%)
2015/16	445	141 (32%)

Notes:

- 1 Figures as at 17 February 2016.
- 2 Includes full time and part time posts.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education , pursuant to AQW 54183/11-16, to detail the percentage of (a) children; and (b) teachers that have withdrawn from taking part in the teaching of RE in schools.

(AQW 55482/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Neither my Department nor the Education Authority (EA) hold information on RE withdrawals. This information is held at individual school level and there is no obligation for schools to report such withdrawals to the EA.

As outlined in my response to AQW 54184/11-16, inspectors only visit RE lessons to evaluate teaching and learning when it is requested by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how his Department monitors Religious Education in Maintained schools.

(AQW 55485/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Neither my Department nor the Education Authority (EA) hold information on RE withdrawals. This information is held at individual school level and there is no obligation for schools to report such withdrawals to the EA.

As outlined in my response to AQW 54184/11-16, inspectors only visit RE lessons to evaluate teaching and learning when it is requested by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail the Education Authority's policy on encouraging and facilitating Irish-medium and Integrated education.

(AQW 55486/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department expects the Education Authority's support in fulfilling the statutory duties to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated and Irish-medium Education. The Education Authority has confirmed that it is cognisant of the duties and pays due regard to these in all relevant areas of work.

Both sectors are represented on the Education Authority Board and the Authority works closely with officials of the Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) in the conduct of its business.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail what steps are being taken to address the issue created by gaps in GCSE exam subjects offered in 2016-17.

(AQW 55494/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department wrote to school principals on 19 January underlining my decision on GCSE grading. The letter acknowledged that there will be some subjects where there is not at present an alternative to the 9-1 specification and outlined how these will be dealt with.

I also commissioned guidance from CCEA, as the regulator here, on how to move forward with those small-entry subjects that would cease to be available. My decisions on this small number of subjects will be conveyed to schools by the CCEA Regulator in the coming weeks.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Education to detail any collaboration between his Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety aimed at improving mental health among secondary school pupils.

(AQW 55500/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department collaborates with DHSSPS and indeed other statutory and public sector departments and agencies, on a number of initiatives including initiatives to improve mental health. To give you some examples:

You will be aware of the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability and the Action Plans emerging from this review. As a member of the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group (IDMG) overseeing the fulfilment of commitments made in response to the Review, I recently agreed to my Department, working with colleagues in DHSSPS and others, to playing its part in a review of the current Bamford Action Plan, which covered the period 2011 – 2015. My Department has met all its current commitments and the outcome of the review will offer an opportunity to reconsider the DE actions that contribute to the successful implementation of accepted Bamford recommendations.

I am also a member of an inter-departmental Ministerial Co-ordination Group overseeing the 'Protect Life – A Shared Vision' strategy aimed at preventing suicides. Arising from that work I recently published guidance for schools on; 'Protecting Life in Schools – Helping Protect Against Suicide'. This document was produced by a stakeholder group including colleagues from DHSSPS.

My Department has recently collaborated with DHSSPS colleagues on a review of the policy guidance document, 'Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People' which provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

DHSSPS staff, along with other organisations; have been involved in working groups within the DE 'i-Matter' Programme. The 'i-Matter' Programme addresses how the entire school community should be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils, what support systems are available for vulnerable pupils, and what support is available to schools in the event of a crisis.

My Department funds the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) and work closely with DHSSPS particularly in relation to the review of the Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Stepped Care Model of Service. Staff from the ICSS work on a daily basis with Social Services colleagues when providing support to pupils.

I hope that these examples serve to illustrate the close working relationship that my Department has with DHSSPS in the area of improving mental health.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Education to detail any projects undertaken by his Department to improve mental health among school pupils.

(AQW 55501/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There are a number of ways in which awareness of mental health issues can be raised and supported within schools.

The statutory curriculum clearly states that pupils should be taught about the importance of learning about mental health and wellbeing. It provides opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge on how to sustain their health and learn about a healthy lifestyle.

At primary level, managing feelings and emotions is a compulsory element of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and provides opportunities for pupils to better understand their own feelings and the feelings of others, as well as how to sustain their health, growth and wellbeing.

At post-primary level, the Personal Health strand of Learning for Life and Work provides opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of recognising and managing factors that may influence physical and emotional/mental health throughout life.

The 'iMatter' Programme aims to encourage the entire school community to be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils. Under this programme a suite of homework diary inserts and posters on topics of concern to young people such as self esteem, substance abuse and coping with stress, worry and anxiety, are distributed to schools. The diary

inserts are also available on the Department of Education website at www.deni.gov.uk and can be downloaded directly by young people.

Also linked to the 'iMatter' Programme is the newly published guidance for schools on; 'Protecting Life in Schools – Helping Protect Against Suicide'. The focus of this document is the promotion of the many positive and supportive measures that schools can put in place to help safeguard the emotional health and wellbeing of their pupils.

There is considerable evidential and research information to confirm the position that counselling in schools supports the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to reach their potential. This is why the Department funds the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS). Pupils can self-refer to the Counsellor within their school, who is there to provide a 'listening ear' and who works as an integral part of the schools pastoral care system.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education under the new Education Authority, whether the former Western Education and Library Board in Omagh will be known as the Western Regional Area.

(AQW 55505/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority is a single regional authority which replaces the five Education and Library Boards.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education whether the managers in each Education and Library Board will be retained within their respective areas.

(AQW 55506/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: No decisions have yet been taken by the Education Authority about the future location of staff. In consultation with Trades Unions, the Authority will be developing a location strategy over the next 12 months which will address the matter of the location of its staff and functions.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education whether his Department and the Education Authority intend to base five directors in the Greater Belfast Area.

(AQW 55507/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: No decisions have yet been taken by the Education Authority about the future location of staff. In consultation with Trades Unions, the Authority will be developing a location strategy over the next 12 months which will address the matter of the location of its staff and functions.

In the meantime, the newly appointed Directors will be based at Forestview, Belfast, to allow them to complete their induction period.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what legal provision prevents teachers retiring under the Voluntary Exit Scheme or Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme being re-employed on either a temporary or permanent basis in local schools.

(AQW 55525/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Teachers do not retire under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, rather they are made redundant and as such can seek re-employment in schools.

Whilst there is no legislation which prevents teachers being re-employed on either a temporary or permanent basis in local schools, in accordance with the provisions of Article 69(1) and (6) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) 1986, the Department of Education determined, with effect from December 2011, the annual salary paid to teachers who have been granted premature retirement, and who are re-employed in grant-aided schools is restricted to Point 1 of the teachers Main Pay Scale.

It is intended that this determination would include those leaving the profession under the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme.

Further information regarding this can be found in DE Circular 2011/17: Rate of Pay for Prematurely Retired Teachers.

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/2011-17-rate-of-pay-for-prematurely-retired-teachers.pdf>

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of times children that use wheelchairs were unable to be transported to school in the (a) 2014-15; and (b) 2015-16 academic year to date, due to the breakdown or unavailability of buses with tail lifts.

(AQW 55539/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority has informed me that it does not record this information.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of times the Education Authority or Education and Library Boards compensated the parents of children that use wheelchairs in the (a) 2014-15; and (b) 2015-16 academic year to date, because they had to make their own travel arrangements for their children due to the unavailability or breakdown of school buses with tail lifts.

(AQW 55540/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority have informed me that where they are unable to operate a normal school transport service, parents will be required to ensure their children get to and from school. The Authority has not paid compensation to parents in these circumstances in 2014-15 or 2015-16, however, where appropriate, the Authority does have the discretion to provide assistance to parents with travelling expenses.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of times (i) children with special needs were unable to be brought to school due to the unavailability of regular school transport buses in the (a) 2014-15; and (b) 2015-16 academic year to date; and (ii) compensation was paid to parents to cover the alternative transport arrangements they had to make.

(AQW 55541/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority (EA) has informed me that in relation to part (i) they do not record this information. In relation to part (ii) where the EA are unable to operate a normal school transport service, parents will be required to ensure their children get to and from school. The Authority has not paid compensation to parents in these circumstances in 2014-15 or 2015-16, however, where appropriate, the Authority does have the discretion to provide assistance to parents with travelling expenses.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department's policy on ensuring transport to school for children with special needs that use wheelchairs.

(AQW 55542/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education's home to school transport policy requires the Education Authority to provide transport assistance in accordance with the provisions documented within a child's statement of special educational needs. Where a statement does not specify the need for transport, pupils may still be eligible under DE circular 1996/41.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department's current policy on home to school transport; and whether he has plans to review the policy.

(AQW 55546/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The current home to school transport policy is detailed in my Department's circular number 1996/41 and a copy of this circular can be found on my Department's website (<https://www.deni.gov.uk/publications/circular-199641-home-school-transport>).

An independent review of this policy has been completed however it will be for the next Minister for Education to consider if it is appropriate to revise the current policy in light of this review.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number classroom assistant vacancies in North Down, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55552/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of classroom assistant vacancies in North Down in each of the last 5 years is provided below.

Number of classroom assistant vacancies in North Down in each of the last 5 years

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
No of vacant posts advertised	30	9	25	26	43

The majority of vacant posts (96%) were filled.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the amount of Capital New Build announced for commitment to schools since May 2011, broken down by education sector,

(AQW 55553/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Since May 2011, I have made four major capital announcements of new build projects to be advanced in planning. The total capital value of these 66 projects is broadly estimated to be circa £563m. The following table details the number of schools that have been announced since May 2011, broken down by sector. These schools are at various stages, from just being announced on 15 March 2016 to having construction completed.

Funding for a project is always subject to the available budget as the project moves forward.

Education Sector	Number of Schools
Controlled	25
Controlled Integrated	1
Grant Maintained Integrated	6
Irish Medium	8

Education Sector	Number of Schools
Maintained	22
Voluntary Grammar School	4
Total	66

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 55004/11-16, to detail how he intends to address the issue of school governors that have wrongly suspended teachers from their posts.

(AQW 55575/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: As I indicated in my response to AQW 55003/11-16, the Department of Education does not employ teachers, and as such is not directly involved in employment matters, including the precautionary suspension of teachers.

Teachers are employed by the relevant Board of Governors (BoG) for each school setting and responsibility for suspending a teacher rests with the BoG in liaison with the relevant employing authority.

In my response to AQW 55003/11-16, I detailed a number of written protocols and procedures which apply to precautionary suspensions. These protocols and procedures have been published and provide advice and guidance to all grant-aided schools within all sectors.

My Department continues to work with the employers/employing authorities to ensure that suspensions are monitored and reviewed regularly.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the support provided to looked after children (lac) by lac teams within the Education Authority, including (a) the number of staff including Education Welfare Officers, youth workers and admin staff; and (b) number of vacancies at each grade, broken down by Education Authority Region.

(AQW 55594/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been informed by the Education Authority that the following officers provide support to Looked After Children:

Support provided to Looked After Children (LAC) by LAC teams within the Education Authority

Education Welfare Officers	No of Staff	No of Vacancies
Belfast ¹	2 Education Welfare Officers 1 social worker [funded by Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT)] 1 LAC Tutor [part funded by BHSCT]	1 EWO [in the process of recruitment]
North Eastern ²	1 Senior Education Welfare Officer 4.2 Education Welfare Officers 1 FTE teacher [funded by Northern Health & Social Care Trust]	0
South Eastern ¹	1 Senior Education Welfare Officer 1 Education Welfare Officer 1 LAC Tutor [part-time]	0
Southern ³	23 Education Welfare Officers	2
Western ⁴	26 ⁵	0
Youth Workers	No of Staff	No of Vacancies
Belfast	1	0
North Eastern	0	0
South Eastern	0	0
Southern	0 ⁶	1 [funding dependant]
Western	3 ⁷	0
Admin Staff	No of Staff	No of Vacancies
Belfast	0	0

Education Welfare Officers	No of Staff	No of Vacancies
North Eastern	0.83	0.42
South Eastern	1	1 ^a
Southern	1	0
Western	1 Assistant Advisory Officer	0.5
	1 Adviser	0
Education Other Than At School staff are actively involved in the educational provision for a number of LAC children.		

- 1 Belfast and South Eastern offices have operated a joint team across both areas due to the high volume of LAC living in one area and going to school in the other.
- 2 Residential Tutor Support provided to individual young people in the 5 Northern Trust residential care units as and when required.
- 3 Southern does not have a separate team to support LAC pupils. Support is co-ordinated through Pupil Personal Development Services consisting of a team of staff from a teaching, youth and welfare background. [1 Adviser, 3 Assistant Advisory Officers, 1 LAC Educational Support Teacher, 1 Learning Mentor and 1 Executive Officer].
- 4 Western does not have a dedicated LAC team therefore work is conducted across a number of CYPS services with local fora to connect services both internal and external to EA.
- 5 All Education Welfare Officers work with LAC children.
- 6 One Assistant Advisory Officer with Youth background.
- 7 Youth Services operate a pilot in partnership with Western Health & Social Care Trust in the Foyle area where youth work staff engage with appropriately referred children from residential homes.
- 8 Post has been intermittently filled with agency/temporary staff.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the scale of school refurbishment needed in North Down.
(AQW 55595/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department funds maintenance works required across the schools' estate prioritised according to the level of risk associated with the deterioration. The Education Authority has advised that the maintenance backlog figure across controlled, maintained and special schools in the North Down area is circa £7.37m. This is the 'make good' cost necessary to bring school buildings back to the condition that they had when they were built, rather than an indicator of scale of refurbishment required.

An annual programme of minor capital works is also funded with applications prioritised according to greatest need, for example meeting inescapable statutory requirements such as health and safety, fire protection and disabled facilities.

The Department does not maintain a prioritised list of schools in need of a new school build. When I am considering making a new Major Capital announcement, the Department will make a 'call' to the school Managing Authorities for a list of the schools that they consider to be most in need of a new build. These projects are then subject to a protocol to create a prioritised list of projects. Those projects that achieve the highest score are then announced subject to an assessment of the likely budget that will be available at the time when the projects are likely to commence the construction phase.

I was pleased to include Crawfordsburn Primary School in my most recent Major Capital Investment announcement earlier this month which provided approval for 10 new build projects in the primary sector to proceed in planning representing further investment in the schools' estate of circa £40m.

In addition, in 2014, I approved planning to proceed for a School Enhancement Programme (SEP) Project at Sullivan Upper School in Holywood. This project will move on site in the coming weeks, providing for a new multi-purpose sports hall, synthetic pitch and changing facilities at a cost of just under £3m.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education why the Northern Ireland Teaching Council does not give full recognition to all teaching qualifications from other parts of the UK.
(AQW 55600/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council (GTCNI) approves qualifications for registration in accordance with its 'Qualification Rules for Teachers in Nursery, Primary, Post Primary and Special Schools'. It has advised that in recent years, the number of pathways to gaining qualified teacher status has increased particularly in England. Applications from teachers who trained in other UK jurisdictions therefore need to be assessed on an individual basis.

As the statutory registering body, the GTCNI must satisfy itself, schools and parents that persons who wish to teach here, possess the appropriate qualifications and skills.

In light of the changing policy framework relating to teacher education particularly in England, the GTCNI is planning to review its approach to the approval of qualifications in the near future.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether the scope of the study into mutual recognition of teacher qualifications will also include recognition of teacher qualifications and experience gained in other parts of the UK.

(AQW 55601/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council has advised that it is planning to take forward a review of teacher qualifications for the purposes of registration as a teacher. I understand this will look at recent and ongoing developments and practice relating to initial teacher education and qualifications in other jurisdictions in the UK and further afield.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on new build or additional capital spend for Glenveagh School.

(AQW 55642/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently no plans to progress a new school build for Glenveagh School and the school has not been included in any of my capital announcements to date. The Education Authority (EA), as the managing authority for controlled schools, would have the opportunity to submit a project at Glenveagh School for consideration as part of any future capital announcement process.

Over £1.2 million capital funding has been spent on minor works at Glenveagh School from 2009 to date. Additionally, a minor works project to upgrade the roof structure is currently underway at an approximate cost of £52,000 and a further similar scheme is included on a list of minor works projects being considered for 2016/17, subject to funding and relative priority.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the consultation process that will take place on the Special Schools Area Planning policy.

(AQW 55643/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: It is assumed that the question refers to the Special Schools Area Plan. The Education Authority (EA) are preparing a draft regional 3 year Area Plan for Special Schools and Year 1 Action Plan for submission to my Department by July 2016. Following consideration, the EA will be authorised to proceed to public consultation.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how much his (a) Department; and (b) its arm's-length bodies has spent on office supplies in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53946/11-16)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The total amount spent by my Department and its arm's length bodies, on office supplies, in each of the last five years, was as follows:

	Y/E 31/03/15 £	Y/E 31/03/14 £	Y/E 31/03/13 £	Y/E 31/03/12 £	Y/E 31/03/11 £
Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)	248,585	290,015	275,512	287,491	260,724
Arm's Length Bodies	649,153	755,348	859,691	869,415	823,972

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the recently published ONS statistics which show that Northern Ireland's comparative productivity, relative to the UK average, is widening and that Northern Ireland's productivity is now amongst the lowest in the developed world.

(AQW 54653/11-16)

Dr Farry: I would refer the member to the answer contained within AQW 54652/11-16 in which you asked the same question of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister. My officials have been liaising with their colleagues in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and there is no further information to add in respect of the productivity data or assessment.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning by how much would university fees need to be raised to make up the funding gap caused by the cuts to his budget.

(AQW 54783/11-16)

Dr Farry: University tuition fees already vary according to various factors, including the student's mode and level of study and their country of domicile.

My Department has recently published an options paper to outline the full spectrum of models available to the Executive to resource higher education in the future, through different combinations of public and individual contributions. The full paper can be accessed through the link below.

- <https://www.delni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/del/HE%20options%20paper.pdf>.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) revenue; and (ii) capital spend by each university in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55031/11-16)

Dr Farry: As my Department does not hold details of the revenue or capital spend of each university, it is suggested that you contact the institutions direct for the information you require.

- Queen's University Belfast vc.office@qub.ac.uk
- Ulster University vice-chancellor@ulster.ac.uk
- Open University john.addy@open.ac.uk

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has put any cases to the Westminster government to apply to the European Globalisation Fund on behalf of the workforces at Gallahers and Michelin.

(AQW 55099/11-16)

Dr Farry: Officials in my Department have consulted with officials in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and in the European Commission, and at this stage it is unclear whether an application to this Fund would be successful.

Background

- 1 The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) was launched in 2007 and may provide up to €500m each year to support workers made redundant as a result of changing global trade patterns, to find another job as quickly as possible. The EGF will provide one-off, time limited individual support geared to helping workers, 'severely and personally affected by trade-adjustment redundancies'. The EGF may fund active labour market policies focused entirely on helping the workers affected by globalisation-related redundancies, for example through:
 - job-search assistance, occupational guidance, tailor-made training and re-training including IT skills and certification of acquired experience, outplacement assistance and entrepreneurship promotion or aid for self-employment;
 - special time-limited measures, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances or allowances to individuals participating in lifelong learning and training activities; and
 - measures to stimulate in particular disadvantaged or older workers, to remain in or return to the labour market.
- 2 EGF is intended to **complement** support provided by the employers and national authorities concerned in terms of active employment measures. It will not fund passive social protection measures such as retirement pensions or unemployment benefits, which are the competence of the Member States. The threshold number of redundancies required in order to access the fund is 500, to include not only the workers of the main company or sector experiencing difficulty but also employees of the main company's suppliers if they are facing difficulty as a result.
- 3 Only the workers affected by the redundancies may benefit. The Fund does not contribute towards the restructuring of companies or industrial sector.
- 4 Any application to the Fund would need to be prepared by a body close to the local labour market with sufficient information to complete the application e.g. NI Department with input from other Agencies/Bodies. There would be initial costs in doing so. The changed EGF criteria include some facility for recouping administrative costs further down the line. The Commission will audit the results of a successful EGF application and this means that dispersal and oversight of the Fund monies should also be managed close to the redundancy.
- 5 Any application to the Fund would be made on behalf of the Member State. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would be the lead Department along with the Treasury. Any application would take up to 6 months to be approved. This is because there is no fund as such, rather money that is drawn down from unspent allocations in the EU budget up to a maximum of €500m Euros per annum, money that would otherwise be returned to the Member States. Each proposal to mobilise the fund following scrutiny by the Commission, then has to be approved by Budget Committee and the European Parliament. Therefore, by the time money is received, it would be for expenditure already incurred.
- 6 As indicated above, the Fund must complement existing provision. The Department has a wide range of assistance and provision available to assist those who have been made redundant. This ranges from the provision of Redundancy Clinics, an Adviser Service, Job Fair and Advice Forums to programmes such as Steps to Success, Pathways to Work and a number of disability employment programmes. Individuals may access information and advice on alternative employment opportunities, training and educational opportunities and access to the Careers Service for those who wish to consider alternative careers.
- 7 It is important to note that DWP, as the 'lead' Department (with HMT) in the UK in matters relating to the Fund, has not been keen on accessing it. DWP's view is that the UK already provides a comprehensive package of services, coupled with services provided by other bodies, to those who are made redundant. DWP has also taken the view that the focus

of the fund should be to assist small or weak countries/economies, not countries of the UK's size or existing level of services.

- 8 It is also the case that access to the Fund by the UK, because it is a net **contributor** to the EU budget, will provide much less by way of additional gain than for other countries.
- 9 It should be noted that DWP has never made any applications to the Fund.

Drafted by John Noble, 10 March 2016 ext. 57416

Cleared by Colin Jack, 10 March 2015 – ext 57845

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans his Department has to encourage more people from Protestant working class communities into further education.

(AQW 55272/11-16)

Dr Farry: I am committed to addressing educational under-achievement.

Regardless of whether problems relate to unemployment, low skills or the poor acquisition of qualifications, my Department's policies, strategies and programmes are designed to meet the needs of individuals, irrespective of their background.

The number of further education enrolments of Protestant boys (aged 16 & 17) from working class areas (MDM quintiles 1 & 2) enrolling on FE accredited courses has increased by 10% from 3,472 to 3,807 between 2010/11 and 2012/13. In the 2012/13 academic year 32% of Protestant male enrolments (aged 16 & 17) were from the 40% most deprived areas. While, of course, more can always be done, these are encouraging statistics which demonstrate that progress is being made in this important area.

While increasing participation is one challenge, the other main challenge is to raise standards and improve outcomes for students. The extensive range of reforms I have initiated in apprenticeships, youth training and more recently further education are designed to raise standards to meet the future needs of the economy and to ensure that all can contribute to, and share in, future economic success – regardless of their personal circumstances, address or community background.

The new further education strategy "Further Education Means Success" was launched in January. One of the themes of the new Strategy is Social Inclusion within which there are two policy commitments – "Increasing Economic Participation through Engagement" and "Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Information and Communication Technology".

Colleges' distinctive contribution to social inclusion will be to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and qualifications required to find, or progress within, employment in order to avail of the economic benefits of economic participation. Working in partnership with others, colleges will support diversity and social inclusion through widening access to provision for those with low or no skills or other barriers to learning. Within this broad remit Colleges will develop approaches specific to the needs of their areas and this will include action to increase participation by people from Protestant working class communities.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there are any opportunities for individuals on benefits to get assistance by way of funding for a Public Service Vehicle licence.

(AQW 55314/11-16)

Dr Farry: Depending on a person's individual circumstances, assistance towards the cost of a Public Service Licence may be provided through the Adviser Discretion Fund.

A client wishing to be considered for this award should speak with an Employment Service Adviser in a JobCentre or Jobs & Benefits office.

Mr Diver asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the direct grants paid by the Executive to the each local university over the last five years.

(AQW 55386/11-16)

Dr Farry: Details of direct grants paid by my Department out of Executive funds to each local university over the last five financial years are set out below:

Queen's University Belfast

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Recurrent Grant (£m)	122.3	105.2	106.4	105.9	100.9
Capital Grant (£m)	14.4	3.3	6.0	9.9	22.6
Total	136.7	108.5	112.4	115.8	123.5

Ulster University

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Recurrent Grant (£m)	99.0	85.5	87.2	85.2	80.9
Capital Grant (£m)	9.0	2.2	4.8	6.8	13.3
Total	108.0	87.7	92.0	92.0	94.2

The Open University in Northern Ireland

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Recurrent Grant (£m)	0.1	0.1	0.1	4.2	5.2
Capital Grant (£m)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	0.1	0.1	0.1	4.2	5.2

My Department only assumed full responsibility for recurrent funding of the Open University's operations in Northern Ireland from academic year 2013-14.

Mr Diver asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of (i) undergraduate; and (ii) graduate students at each local university over the last five years.

(AQW 55387/11-16)

Dr Farry: The tables below detail the most recent statistical information on the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at each local university from 2010/11 to 2014/15.

Table 1: Undergraduate enrolments at Northern Ireland Universities

Year	Queen's University	Ulster University	Stranmillis	St Mary's	Open University	Total
2010/11	18,355	20,295	1,170	865	4,590	45,275
2011/12	17,865	20,740	1,195	875	4,560	45,235
2012/13	18,075	20,655	1,185	865	4,195	44,975
2013/14	18,370	20,335	1,165	860	3,885	44,620
2014/15	18,855	20,570	1,240	860	3,625	45,150

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2: Postgraduate Enrolments at Northern Ireland Universities

Year	Queen's University	Ulster University	Stranmillis	St Mary's	Open University	Total
2010/11	5,840	5,225	130	120	270	11,585
2011/12	5,120	5,820	145	145	250	11,485
2012/13	4,625	5,800	275	235	245	11,180
2013/14	4,950	5,865	360	350	250	11,775
2014/15	4,995	5,510	315	295	175	11,295

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

I trust you find this information helpful.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55405/11-16)

Dr Farry: From April 2011 to December 2015, the Department for Employment and Learning and its arms length bodies has spent a total of £892,207 on external consultants (rounded to the nearest pound).

The breakdown per the Department and each of its arms length bodies is attached at Annex A.

Annex A

	Expenditure (£)					
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Period to 31 December 2015	Total
Core Department	98,471	111,953	89,583	190,856	16,770	507,633
Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)	15,452					15,452
Labour Relations Agency (LRA)		8,532	4,268			12,800
Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)		16,063	11,977			28,040
Northern Regional College (NRC)		2,916	42,986	92,098		138,000
Southern Regional College (SRC)		1,170	75,511	27,158		103,839
South West College (SWC)		17,220		23,375		40,595
North West Regional College (NWRC)			7,800	18,067		25,867
Stranmillis University College			12,031	7,950		19,981
Total	113,923	157,854	244,156	359,504	16,770	892,207

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what was the cost to his Department to run the Bangor Jobs Fair held at the Marine Court Hotel.

(AQW 55461/11-16)

Dr Farry: The total cost to the Department for Employment and Learning to run the North Down Job Fair was £2,630.33.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration was given to the impact on part-time higher education numbers for each of the options outlined in Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland: An Options Paper.

(AQW 55471/11-16)

Dr Farry: The options contained within 'Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland' were all designed to address the various financial shortages facing the local higher education sector.

The first of these shortages relates to a structural underfunding between local universities and those in England, amounting to between £900 and £2,500 per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, which includes part-time students. As this funding gap relates to existing undergraduate provision only, the options designed to address it would have no impact on student numbers; they would simply ensure that existing numbers are funded at the level required to ensure quality and competitiveness.

The other major financial shortfall outlined in the paper relates to our degree level skills shortages under a lower corporation tax environment, as informed by the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer. The options refer to an annual undersupply of 1,600 people with degree level skills in our workforce and express a requirement for 4,800 additional full-time undergraduate places per year to address it.

These expansion ambitions are displayed in terms of full-time numbers in order to map the quickest possible pathway through which our degree level skills gaps could be met as we prepare for a lower corporation tax rate in just over two years' time. That being said, an increase in both full-time and part-time provision will be the most effective way to grow our skills base, and the paper has outlined an imperative to rebalance and diversify higher education provision in the long-term.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he is encouraging entrepreneurialism among young females in (i) further; and (ii) higher education.

(AQW 55487/11-16)

Dr Farry: Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset amongst all learners across our education system is a key part of supporting the growth of our economy, and consequently my Department has undertaken a range of work to develop this important area.

Developing teaching staff in order to consequently help support the growth of entrepreneurialism in their learners is a main priority. In further education, research undertaken jointly by Fingerprint Learning Ltd and Stranmillis University College into learning preferences in 2010/11 indicated that entrepreneurs tend to have distinctive learning styles. The research was subsequently built into the Certificate in Teaching (CIT) for tutors in the training sector in 2014/15, with the result that all newly qualified tutors will benefit from this approach. The research results have also been incorporated into teacher training courses, including the CIT, for lecturers in further education from September 2015.

This approach will be developed further through the delivery of policy commitment 9 in the new Further Education Strategy Further Education Means Success: "Developing Employability and Enterprise Skills". Through their teaching strategies and approaches, colleges will seek to develop enterprising learners, who are innovative and creative, and are able to adapt to change.

In higher education, my Department's Higher Education Strategy, Graduating to Success, recognises the need to rebalance the profile of course provision so that it more closely reflects the needs of the economy. Curriculum and course content are the responsibility of individual institutions, and they work with a range of employers, through formal groups, to support the development of graduates with the skills needed in our economy, including the attitudes and behaviours that underpin an entrepreneurial approach. We have also worked with the higher education sector to encourage more female enrolments in economically key STEM disciplines, which traditionally enrol a higher proportion of male than female students.

This issue has been examined further through the STEM Strategy for Northern Ireland, Success through STEM, which included 20 recommendations for government and business to secure and enhance the supply of STEM skills. Addressing the gender imbalance was one of the five recommendations identified for business to lead on. A STEM business subgroup was established to take forward the five recommendations for business. In 2012, the Department funded a STEM business coordinator to support the subgroup's work and, since then, significant progress has been made. In June 2013, the Subgroup produced a draft report entitled 'Addressing Gender Balance – Reaping the Gender Dividend in STEM', with the final report being launched in November 2013.

The importance of entrepreneurialism in leadership and management is likely to be a key theme as we go forward. It is recognised that skills in this area will be important to achieve the aims of the economic strategy. In June 2014, the STEM business subgroup, DEL, and the Equality Commission launched the STEM CEO Charter, which enables STEM organisations to demonstrate their commitment to equal opportunity for women in their employment. Twenty organisations committed to the Charter on the day of the launch and, to date, 37 companies have signed up.

Finally, giving the right advice and guidance to prospective learners is extremely important, and my Department's careers service offers impartial careers advice on an all age basis. While the higher education institutions and further education colleges provide careers support to their students, young people can also avail of the careers service either through a face-to-face interview or through web-chat. In addition, the careers website on NI Direct includes information on how to start up a business, including the potential benefits and challenges, and a self-employment checklist. It also provides useful links to other sources of help including Enterprise NI, Shell Livewire, and the Prince's Trust.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department is working with Further and Higher Education institutions in East Londonderry to match training and skills development with the needs of the local economy. (AQW 55496/11-16)

Dr Farry: Matching the training and skills development with the needs of the local economy is crucial to ensuring a strong and vibrant economy in Northern Ireland and my Department is committed to providing support to employers and ensuring that employers' skills needs are met and continue to be met in a growing economy.

Within the new Further Education Strategy, "Further Education Means Success", the economic development theme highlights the clear role the further education colleges play in identifying and meeting the skills and qualification needs of employers via a more economically focused curriculum, providing direct support to employers by upskilling employees, and supporting employers to become more competitive and innovative.

In implementing the strategy, colleges will play an enhanced role in working more strategically with employers and other key stakeholders to design and develop qualifications and curriculum that meet the current and future needs of employers and the economy. There will be a focus on provision to support strategically important areas of the economy, many of which are export driven, especially at level 3 and above.

The colleges will also continue to provide programmes and tailored solutions, such as Skills Focus and InnovateUs, to upskill employees and meet the specific skills needs of employers, and to support employers to become more competitive, to innovate and to source new markets.

My Department's Higher Education Strategy, "Graduating to Success", recognises the need to rebalance the profile of course provision so that it more closely reflects the needs of Northern Ireland's economy, and this is as true in East Londonderry as it is across Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland's Skills Barometer, which is the result of work that Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre has taken forward with my Department, indicates that skills shortages are particularly acute in certain subject areas, such as Engineering and Technology, Mathematics and Computer Science, Physical and Environmental Sciences and other private sector-driven subjects such as Business and Finance and Creative Arts and Design.

Both universities and all six further education colleges have well-developed mechanisms for engaging with local employers to ensure that the courses being developed meet their needs. The use of foundation degrees and an increasing focus on higher level apprenticeships across the HE and FE sectors, which include periods of work placement at their core, will also ensure that employers will be able to rely on a steady supply of work-ready graduates across a range of qualification levels in economically relevant areas.

We are also now seeing more enrolments in economically key Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths disciplines. In 2014/15, 22% of graduates were in STEM disciplines, up from 18% in 2008.

In addition, I personally chair three working groups representing key priority sectors. These are the Food and Drink Industry Working Group, the Information and Communications Technology Working Group and the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Services Working Group. The membership of these groups includes employers, further and higher education representatives, officials and others with relevant interests. These provide a valuable forum through which employers can articulate their skills needs and interact directly with service and programme providers.

My Department will continue to work with the further and higher education sectors and with industry to ensure that further and higher education provision will meet both the needs of industry and the people of Northern Ireland, including East Londonderry.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assumptions his Department made on student contribution costs for part-time higher education when modelling each of the options outlined in Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland: An Options Paper.

(AQW 55533/11-16)

Dr Farry: Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland' includes several options which involve changes to the contributions made by students to the costs of their education. Those changes have been expressed as changes to the maximum full-time undergraduate fee rates, which my Department caps annually through regulations and are due to rise to £4,030 by 2017/18.

While my Department does not cap maximum part-time undergraduate fee rates in the same manner, in practice local universities model their part-time rates on the full-time rates, based on study intensity using credit points or modules.

The paper assumes that this will continue to be the case, and so the options which entail increases to full-time tuition fee levels assume that part-time fee levels will rise commensurately.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department can assist people who are economically inactive.

(AQW 55558/11-16)

Dr Farry: 'Enabling Success', the Executive's new strategy, aimed at reducing the level of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland, was published on 20th April 2015. The strategy seeks, by 2030, to contribute towards a stable and competitive employment rate in Northern Ireland which exceeds the United Kingdom average, through a reduction in the proportion of the working age population classified as economically inactive.

The implementation of the strategy, over its proposed fifteen year period, is based on eleven key projects, to be managed and resourced on a cross-departmental basis.

An extensive research mapping exercise of economic inactivity service provision in Northern Ireland, aimed at the strategy's key target groups has been completed. However, due to the ongoing pressure on budgets, and the subsequent absorption of these pressures through Departmental baselines, the Enabling Success strategy remains unresourced and the implementation of the remaining cross-departmental projects has been severely hindered.

The Department for Employment and Learning continues to help and support people who are economically inactive. It does so through a number of pre-employment programmes and direct services, the latter of which are delivered by teams of experienced Employment Service Advisers, based in 35 Jobs and Benefits offices and Jobcentres throughout Northern Ireland.

The Department leads on 'Pathways to Success', the Northern Ireland Executive's strategy for dealing with the issue of young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training. A number of new programmes have been launched under this initiative, which has a particular focus on helping those young people who face additional barriers to participation in the current challenging economic context.

In addition, the Department, through the European Social Fund, is providing substantial support to almost 70 local employment and employability projects, which have been designed to help people of all age groups who are economically inactive, or who face additional barriers to work. As an example of these additional barriers, 25 of the projects are specifically aimed at supporting people with disabilities to progress towards and move into paid employment.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what costs the Department has allowed for utilising the Education Training Inspectorate for European Social Fund projects.

(AQW 55574/11-16)

Dr Farry: My Department commissions the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) to assess the quality of provision under the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020 programme. A total of £224,000 has been allocated to the costs for utilising the Education Training Inspectorate under the first call of the Programme.

A breakdown of the costs by Financial Year is detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Allocation
2015/16	£56,000
2016/17	£112,000

Financial Year	Allocation
2017/18	£56,000

These costs will be met using the Technical Assistance allocation which my Department receives from the European Commission to support the administration of the programme.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of jobs promoted by Invest NI over the last five years; and (ii) the number of promoted jobs which have resulted in jobs being created during this time. (AQW 54658/11-16)

Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

- (i) During the past 5 financial years (2010-11 to 2014-15), Invest NI has promoted 43,816 new jobs.
- (ii) Invest NI holds information on jobs created from the beginning of the current Programme for Government. Of the 37,085 jobs promoted between 2011-12 and 2014-15, 18,200 were created by 31st March 2015.

Invest NI support is offered based on a company's commitment to create a set number of new jobs (promoted jobs) over an agreed period of time. In most cases the time period is between three and five years. Consequently, the 18,200 jobs created so far will increase as companies continue to fulfil these commitments. This is monitored and managed by Invest NI with financial support only released when the jobs have been created.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the work of the Omagh Enterprise Agency in the promotion of small and medium sized enterprises and support for business start ups. (AQW 54757/11-16)

Mr Bell: Omagh Enterprise Company (OEC) is the local enterprise agency servicing the Omagh area. The centre has 80,000 sq ft of industrial and office space and currently has circa 60 tenants employing circa 300 staff.

Under Local Government Reform, a number of economic development functions transferred to the 11 new Councils, including Local Start Up provision. At Councils' request Invest NI will continue to manage the Regional Start Initiative (RSI) until October 2016.

OEC is one of the LEA's that delivers the RSI in the Western Contract region. RSI encourages potential entrepreneurs to produce a business plan as one of the key early steps to starting a new business. At January 2016, the Western Regional contract of RSI, including the Omagh area, had delivered 2,371 business plan approvals.

OEC is one of the nine contract managers for the Social Enterprise Hub (SEH) signature programme. They have been responsible for the management of the Western SEH contract since May 2014. SEH offers mentoring, training, workshops, hot desking and test trading facilities to new start social enterprises in the Western Social Investment Fund zone area. Since the contract began OEC has assisted with the establishment of 10 Social Enterprise Test Traders and 15 Social enterprise Start-ups.

OEC is involved in other activities including property rentals, but also programme activity funded from EU sources and through other public sector organisations including DEL. Invest NI has no direct involvement in these.

Advice and guidance is also available to all businesses throughout Northern Ireland through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI, in partnership with NI Direct. Businesses can avail of a range of advisory assistance on business related topics including sales & marketing, design and finance as well as information on events.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the funding (i) his Department; and (ii) Invest NI has allocated to agri-food businesses in East Derry in each year since 2011. (AQW 54826/11-16)

Mr Bell:

- (i) Funding has been provided to agri-food businesses in the East Londonderry constituency via the Renewable Heat Incentive as per the table below:

Financial Year	Total
2013-14	£21,661
2014-15	£215,069
2015-16	£697,394
Total	£934,124

- (ii) It should be noted that Invest NI does not allocate funding by geographic areas such as parliamentary constituencies, or to specific industrial sectors. Assistance patterns are demand-led by those businesses which have come forward with projects suitable for Invest NI support. The table below details the amount of support that Invest NI has offered to businesses in the agri-food sector in the East Londonderry constituency in each financial year since 2011-12:

Financial Year	Total
2011-12	£105,742
2012-13	£1,517,813
2013-14	£290,059
2014-15	£262,288
Total	£2,175,902

Note: Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an estimate of the cost to local businesses of EU regulation.

(AQW 54834/11-16)

Mr Bell: There is no centrally held resource in Northern Ireland which records the cost to local business of regulations which impact on them. The responsibility lies with each Ministerial Department and delivery body to assess the potential cost to business of regulation. The Regulatory Impact Assessment process should be used to identify the most cost effective means of ensuring regulatory compliance.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the answer provided to AQW 51985/11-16.

(AQW 54912/11-16)

Mr Bell: The consultation response on proposed closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) to new onshore wind was published on 4 March 2016. The response confirms closure of the NIRO to large scale onshore wind from 1 April 2016 with exceptions in the form of grace periods. The response also confirms that the NIRO will remain open for the time being to small scale wind until further consultation is completed.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of jobs (i) promoted; and (ii) created in East Londonderry in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54927/11-16)

Mr Bell: It should be noted that 'jobs promoted' are those which supported businesses expect to create in future years, whereas 'Jobs created' are jobs which have actually been filled at a particular point in time, and may relate to investments secured in earlier years. It is therefore not possible to directly compare the number of jobs promoted with those that have been created during the same period.

Table 1 below details the number of jobs that Invest NI has helped promote in the East Londonderry Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) in each of the last five financial years.

Table 1: Invest NI New Jobs Promoted in East Londonderry PCA

Year	New Jobs Promoted
2010-11	182
2011-12	159
2012-13	160
2013-14	253
2014-15	213

Invest NI only holds information on jobs created since the beginning of the current Programme for Government. Table 2 below details the number of jobs that Invest NI has helped to create in the East Londonderry constituency in each of the last four financial years.

Table 2: Invest NI New Jobs Created in East Londonderry PCA

Year	New Jobs Created
2011-12	189

Year	New Jobs Created
2012-13	141
2013-14	201
2014-15	255

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what support is available for start up businesses in North Down.
(AQW 54970/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest NI provides a range of support and practical assistance to start-up businesses across Northern Ireland including West Tyrone. These interventions may be of a financial and non-financial nature.

Export and Global Start assistance is available to entrepreneurs who are starting an export focused business or who have an established business who are seeking to enter export markets for the first time. These businesses are typically supported in areas of job creation, marketing, ICT, skills and strategy and R&D.

Innovation Vouchers - this scheme provides a voucher of up to £5,000 to enable small and medium sized enterprises to engage with one of the 39 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The voucher allows businesses to access specialist skills and expertise to provide an innovative solution to a business issue that cannot be easily solved by the private sector or other support mechanisms.

The Technical Development Incentive (TDI) can offer business start-ups 50% support on eligible technical supplier costs up to a maximum grant of £5,000. Areas that can be supported include Intellectual Property (IP), investigating new technologies and processes, product and process problem resolution, product approval/global technical compliance, process and quality management schemes and improved product design and performance.

The **Propel Programme** helps put the structure around the company to commercialise the service or product and seek investment. Selective Financial Assistance can be used to help accelerate growth. Invest NI also provides a wide range of other assistance appropriate for the High Potential Start Up such as helping the companies with design, to train their staff, protect their IP, develop their management team and strengthen their board.

Separate from grants Invest NI also provides support to startups through its **Access to Finance Programmes** via NI Small Business Loan Fund, Techstart NI and Co-Fund NI and equity to grow businesses can be provided by the Growth Loan Fund and Development Funds respectively.

In addition, the **Regional Start Initiative**, now delivered on behalf of local Councils by Enterprise NI, provides individuals who wish to start their own business with advice and the capability to produce their own business plan. The intention is that this business plan will provide a template for the new entrepreneur to plan and access sources of funds for the business.

Advice and guidance is also available to all businesses throughout Northern Ireland through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI, in partnership with NI Direct. Businesses can avail of a range of advisory assistance on business related topics including sales & marketing, design and finance as well as information on events.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether his Department's decision to grant a prospecting licence for all minerals between Draperstown and Derry has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.
(AQW 54983/11-16)

Mr Bell: The proposal to grant a prospecting licence in Counties Tyrone & Londonderry is under consideration. The period for making representations to DETI with regard to this proposal expires on 14 March 2016. No decision will be made until DETI has had the opportunity to consider all representations made.

DETI does not have a plan or programme for Minerals development in Northern Ireland against which a Strategic Environmental Assessment could be carried out.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment has been made of the impact on the viability of Northern Ireland's conventional electricity generation of government funded renewables and interconnectors.
(AQW 55040/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Strategic Energy Framework 2010 recognised the need for a mix that includes generation from renewables, conventional plant and interconnection. The Review of Costs and Benefits of the Executive's 40% Renewable Electricity Target, published at the following link, <https://www.detini.gov.uk/publications/review-costs-and-benefits-ni-executives-40-renewable-electricity-target> has examined this issue. Interconnectors in NI are not in receipt of ongoing government funding. The Transmission system Operator monitors generation capacity. The I-SEM project includes consideration of capacity requirements.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what is the total project cost of the North-South interconnector.
(AQW 55041/11-16)

Mr Bell: I am advised by the System Operator for Northern Ireland that the total capital cost of the North South Interconnector has been assessed as £204 million/€286 million. The capital costs associated with the Northern Ireland part of the project are £89 million.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what percentage of (i) domestic; and (ii) non-domestic electricity bills arise from grid costs.

(AQW 55042/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Northern Ireland Electricity Networks publication "Have Your Say", accessible at the following link, <http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/documents/Consultations/NIE-Networks-Have-Your-Say> indicates that its average costs account for (i) approximately 24% of domestic electricity bills; and (ii) approximately 20% of small to medium industrial and commercial customer and 9% of large industrial and commercial customer bills.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much of the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme was spent in South Down in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55045/11-16)

Mr Bell: 2007-13 Sustainable Competitiveness Programme

DETI is the Managing Authority for this Programme. However, it should be noted that significant elements of the funding were administered and spent by Invest NI, Tourism NI and other Northern Ireland Government Departments.

Further information about the programme can be found in the 'Achievements and Successes' brochure which has been posted in the Assembly Library and on the Successful Beneficiaries website: <http://successes.eugrants.org/>. Searches can be refined by town and relevant postcode. EU funding is detailed as "Community" funding within each of the projects.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much of the Investment for Growth and Jobs programme funding is projected to be spent in South Down in the next five years.

(AQW 55046/11-16)

Mr Bell: The EU Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme has been allocated €308 million from the EU which will be spent over the period to 31 December 2023. There are financial expenditure targets which require €146.4 million to be spent by 31 December 2021.

The majority of the Programme (€231 million) is to be spent through Invest NI Schemes. Funding from these is allocated on a rolling and competitive basis to eligible companies who fulfil the published criteria. Therefore it is impossible to project spend in a specific area.

Almost €47million is ring-fenced for Low Carbon activity. This is likely to involve a single project with NI-wide benefits. A further €12 million is to be used to meet Programme management and delivery costs over the 2014-2023 period and is not allocated geographically.

The only element of the Programme which is indicatively allocated on a geographical basis is the Local Economic Development strand (€18 million). These are included at Table A. However, it should be noted that allocations made at District Council level are subject to review and can be adjusted based on performance. It is also possible that some allocations will not be fully spent.

Council	Indicative Allocation
Antrim and Newtownabbey	€1,179,227
Ards and North Down	€1,342,407
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	€2,099,120
Belfast	€2,464,940
Causeway Coast and Glens	€1,434,140
Derry City and Strabane	€1,361,038
Fermanagh and Omagh	€1,578,340
Lisburn and Castlereagh City	€1,591,547
Mid and East Antrim	€1,279,314
Mid Ulster	€1,815,314
Newry, Mourne and Down	€1,854,613
Total	€18,000,000

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on his Department's discussions with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arqiva about maximising the benefits to mobile phone coverage in Fermanagh through the Mobile Infrastructure Project.

(AQW 55101/11-16)

Mr Bell: My Department has engaged with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) throughout the deployment of the UK wide Mobile Infrastructure Project. The project will complete on 31 March 2016. DCMS has indicated that 9 new mast sites will have been delivered in Northern Ireland, 2 of which are in Fermanagh, at Clabby and Boho.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the (i) matched; and (ii) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and where the funding was spent.

(AQW 55145/11-16)

Mr Bell: 2007-13 Sustainable Competitiveness Programme

DETI is the Managing Authority for this Programme. However, it should be noted that significant elements of the funding were administered and spent by Invest NI, Tourism NI and other Northern Ireland Government Departments.

Further information about the programme can be found in the 'Achievements and Successes' brochure which has been posted in the Assembly Library and on the Successful Beneficiaries website: <http://successes.eugrants.org/>. Searches can be refined by town and relevant postcode. EU funding is detailed as "Community" funding within each of the projects.

2014-20 Investment for Growth and Jobs programme

DETI is the Managing Authority for this Programme. However, it should be noted that more than 80% of the funding will be administered and spent by Invest NI. From the 1st of January 2014 to the 30th of September 2015 under this Programme, 11 projects with Letters of Offer totalling £1.1 million have been supported in the West Tyrone area. Up until the 30th of September 2015, £35,185 in expenditure has been claimed against these projects.

2007-13 Interreg IVa programme

For Interreg Programmes, the Managing Authority is the Special EU Programmes Body and DETI fulfils the Accountable Department role for relevant measures.

As above further information can found on the Successful Beneficiaries website <http://successes.eugrants.org/>.

2014-20 Interreg Va programme

DETI has not spent any monies to date on this programme as calls for projects are currently underway.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Jobs Fund.

(AQW 55224/11-16)

Mr Bell: The Jobs Fund was established in April 2011 and ran until March 2015. The fund supported business owners and new business starts across Northern Ireland to create new, sustainable jobs to help tackle unemployment arising from the international economic downturn.

Since its inception in April 2011, 10,727 jobs have been promoted against a target of 6,300; and 7,893 jobs have actually been created up to the end of September 2015, against a target of 4,000.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the removal of Air Passenger Duty.

(AQW 55225/11-16)

Mr Bell: Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy at Ulster University commissioned by DETI and DFP to undertake a comprehensive assessment of economic impact of short haul Air Passenger Duty (APD) on NI economy. Direct Long haul APD is devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, has been reduced to zero, and costs approximately £2.4 million annually.

The assessment identified that any reduction in short-haul APD would result in increased passenger numbers using Northern Ireland's airports. However, the assessment also identified that when the cost to the public finances in Northern Ireland is taken into consideration, APD is not considered to be a strong economic development tool. A copy of the report is available at <https://www.detini.gov.uk/publications/air-passenger-duty>

Any reduction in APD in Northern Ireland alone would have to be paid from our public finances.

This tax is imposed and set by the UK Government and the onus is on it to deal with this at a national level. The Finance Minister and I continue to stress to Westminster that APD is an unfair tax which has an adverse impact upon travellers departing Northern Ireland's airports.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the (i) successful; and (ii) unsuccessful applicants to the National Tourism Events Sponsorship Scheme 2016/17, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 55307/11-16)

Mr Bell:

- (i) 82 applications were received under the National Tourism Events Sponsorship Scheme 2016/17 which resulted in 56 sponsorship agreements being issued to 56 successful applicants.

Although Sponsorship award offers have been issued further information is not available until these have been accepted by the applicants. When acceptance agreements are returned, a full list of successful events will be published on www.tourismni.com/events.

- (ii) Tourism NI cannot release information on unsuccessful applications to the National Tourism Events Sponsorship Scheme without an applicant's prior written consent.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of accommodation providers in each constituency that have signed up to the Walkers Welcome Scheme.

(AQW 55324/11-16)

Mr Bell: Tourism NI currently has 195 accommodation providers successfully accredited with the Walkers Welcome Scheme.

Figures are collated by Council area. The breakdown is as follows:

Council Area	Participants
Antrim and Newtownabbey	5
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	10
Belfast	7
Causeway Coast and Glens	55
Derry and Strabane	8
Fermanagh and Omagh	31
Lisburn and Castlereagh	5
Mid and East Antrim	9
Mid Ulster	16
Newry, Mourne and Down	35
North Down and Ards	14
Total	195

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why InvestNI is not part of the delegation from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council which will visit the United States of America in an attempt to attract inward investment to the Borough.

(AQW 55329/11-16)

Mr Bell: Invest NI works closely with all local councils to develop economic growth and welcomes any opportunity to support councils to attract new inward investment to their area. Invest NI provides advice and assistance where required, either locally in Northern Ireland, or through our network of international offices.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact his recent announcement on subsidies for the renewable energy sector will have on anaerobic digester schemes.

(AQW 55332/11-16)

Mr Bell: My announcement on 4 March relates to the closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to new large scale onshore wind generating stations. It does not impact on anaerobic digestion schemes.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to name and detail the substations in Tyrone and Armagh that will feed the North-South interconnector.

(AQW 55336/11-16)

Mr Bell: I am advised by the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) that the proposed 400kV North South Interconnector will connect to the existing 275kV transmission system at a new substation called Turleenan. This substation will connect to the existing Tandragee and Tamnamore 275kV substations.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) any conversations he has had with the Secretary of State regarding the Enterprise Zone at Coleraine and (ii) when an announcement can be expected.
(AQW 55367/11-16)

Mr Bell:

- (i) I have not had any talks with the Secretary of State regarding the pilot Enterprise Zone in Coleraine.
- (ii) The pilot Enterprise Zone announced in the Chancellor's Budget statement in March 2014 will only offer Enhanced Capital Allowances as an incentive. The decision to designate a particular area offering Enhanced Capital Allowances is ultimately for HM Treasury. HM Treasury is currently considering a request for formal designation of a pilot Enterprise Zone in the Coleraine area and it is expected that designation will be confirmed in the near future.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there is an obligation to notify the public when changes are made to the work programmes on petroleum licences.
(AQW 55446/11-16)

Mr Bell: No.

Department of the Environment

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to the issue of dead mileage within taxi regulations.
(AQW 53090/11-16)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): My Department made the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (S.R. 2016 No. 148) on 11 March 2016 to address the issue of dead miles.

The Regulations amend the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (S.R. 2015 No. 394) by adding a third exemption to regulation 10(2) which requires all Class A & B taxis to use a taximeter. This additional exemption exists when there is agreement between the passenger and the operator, in advance of the journey, that the distance to be travelled by the taxi will exceed the distance of the passenger's journey and the passenger waives the right to have the fare calculated by the taximeter and agrees the fare for the journey.

The Department will monitor the usage of the exemption to ensure that the exemption is working appropriately.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail what communication he has had with taxi companies in East Londonderry, in advance of changes to the law in May 2016.
(AQW 54871/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In February 2016 my Department issued a letter to all industry stakeholders and Northern Ireland taxi drivers, including those in the East Londonderry constituency.

The letter advised of important changes for the taxi industry from 31 May 2016 and also provided a link to the nidirect website, a helpline phone number and a Taxis Act e-mail address. The letter also advised that my Department will be providing more detailed information over the coming months.

The information provided to date and continued communication in the weeks approaching the commencement of the new regulations will help taxi operators throughout the North to prepare and make the necessary arrangements.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment what support his Department is providing to taxi companies in East Londonderry to enable them to adapt and make the transition in advance of the Taxis Act coming into force.
(AQW 54872/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In February 2016 my Department issued a letter to all industry stakeholders and Northern Ireland taxi drivers, including those in the East Londonderry constituency.

The letter advised of important changes for the taxi industry from 31 May 2016 and also provided a link to the nidirect website, a helpline phone number and a Taxis Act e-mail address. The letter also advised that my Department will be providing more detailed information over the coming months.

The information provided to date and continued communication in the weeks approaching the commencement of the new regulations will help taxi operators throughout the North to prepare and make the necessary arrangements.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, further to his Department's letter dated 23rd October 2014 confirming a waste management plan was not required at Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus, to detail (i) the definition of a waste management facility used; (ii) where can this be found in the Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries)

Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 and; (iii) whether this definition is the sole basis on which a mining waste management plan is required.

(AQW 54913/11-16)

Mr Durkan: For clarification, the Department wrote to InfraStrata in July 2014 advising that the proposed operations fell within the scope of the Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations (NI) 2010 and that a Waste Management Plan was in fact required for the site. InfraStrata submitted this information in March 2015.

Before this information had been received, the Department mistakenly responded to an FOI request in October 2014 advising the requestor that a Waste Management Plan was not required.

My officials will be writing to the original requestor to advise them of the correct position.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment what studies his Department has conducted into the environmental impact of burning, putting into landfill or any other method used for disposing of end-of-life tyres.

(AQW 54941/11-16)

Mr Durkan: NIEA uses best practice developed by all UK Environment Agencies and other relevant organisations to set the conditions for the storage and treatment of tyres on sites with the relevant authorisations.

The End of Waste criteria for the production of tyre-derived rubber materials sets out how to fully recover tyres and turn them into quality products. One purpose of the Quality Protocol is to protect human health and to prevent pollution of the environment. It defines the point at which waste tyres cease to be waste and can be used as a product, without the requirement for waste management controls. Compliance with these criteria is considered sufficient to ensure that, the fully recovered product may be used without undermining the effectiveness of the Waste Framework Directive and therefore, without the need for waste management controls. A designated use under the Quality Protocol is landfill engineering, whereby the tyre-derived rubber material is used as a replacement for aggregate in the construction of landfill sites. The Quality Protocol is available at the link below:

<http://www.tyrecovery.org.uk/inc/uploads/2012/11/TDRM-A4-Report-2014-v2.pdf>

I have ongoing concern about the impacts of burning "controlled" waste in an uncontrolled manner particularly in built up areas. These impacts include potential damage to human health and the environment; materials such as tyres and treated pallets are burnt which pose a potential risk to human health and have a detrimental impact on the environment; physical damage to public and private property with high associated costs; low level criminality and in certain cases behaviours that can be both anti-social and which create or increase tensions between communities.

There is a magnitude of research completed throughout the UK and Europe on the burning of tyres which I won't repeat, rather I will develop actions to manage the disposal of used tyres and these include;

- 1 Helping to maximise legitimate reuse and recycling
- 2 Ensuring that waste tyre producers, brokers, carriers and waste facilities are in compliance with relevant waste legislation
- 3 Progressively reducing the number of tyres being burnt on bonfires in collaboration with other public bodies
- 4 Reducing the number of surplus tyres on farms

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to raise awareness of the dangers of munitions and phosphorus blocks washing ashore along the South Down coastline.

(AQW 54977/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Munitions which are washed up on the South Down coast are primarily a public safety issue and are not the responsibility of my Department. Where munitions are discovered, they are dealt with by the PSNI, the Coastguard Agency and if required, the Army's Joint Services Explosive Ordnance Team.

As part of the Marine Litter Strategy my Department publishes an ezine entitled "Marine Litter Watch". The publication is circulated to a wide range of coastal stakeholders including; coastal councils, NI Water, voluntary and community groups and private individuals. The next edition will be published in April 2016 and contains a short article alerting beach users to the fact that incendiary devices can be washed up on our coast. The article advises people not to touch these objects and to contact the PSNI immediately.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the plans the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has to open Martello Tower at Magilligan to the public in 2016.

(AQW 55020/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Magilligan Martello Tower is now within the care of the Historic Environment Division of my Department, rather than the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The Tower has in recent years not been routinely open to the public, but has been opened for special events such as the European Heritage Open Days in September.

My Department is preparing a schedule of opening for State Care Monuments, including the Martello Tower, and will publish this in the coming weeks to provide advance information for those seeking to visit the various monuments.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment when his Department was first made aware of the decision by NI Water to demolish the pumping house at Banagher Glen, Dungiven; and whether any consultation took place.

(AQW 55028/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My officials are not aware of a decision by NI Water to demolish a pumping house at Banagher Glen, Dungiven. However NI Water, as the statutory body which provides the water and sewerage services in the North, can avail of certain Permitted Development rights in relation to their undertakings. In the absence of further information on the location or description of the development undertaken, I am unable to confirm if it complies with the relevant regulations.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55089/11-16)

Mr Durkan:

Project Title	Org/Lead Partner Name (Foyle Constituency)	Project Description	2005_06	2006_07	Total Expenditure 06-16	Total Match Funding (£)	Total ERDF (EU element) Cont (£)
Fish Counter - Strule River	The Loughs Agency	Provision of a fish counting station at the River Strule, Omagh.	£29,949	0	£29,949	£7,487	£22,462
Producer Waste Awareness	North West Institute of Further & Higher Education (NWIFHE)	NWIFHE, in association with Letterkenny Institute of Technology, delivered a series of one-day courses to waste producers in the border region, covering waste minimisation, safety and environmental concerns, leading to the award of a Certificate in Waste Awareness accredited by the Chartered Institute of Wastes Management.	0	£8,029	£8,029	£2,007	£6,022
					£37,978	£9,494	£28,484

Over the last ten years, my Department successfully sourced additional funding from the main EU structural programmes. The attached table provides details of two projects, including the lead partner organisations and project descriptions, funded under the Interreg IIIA programme which relate to the Foyle area. The NIEA was the Managing Authority for these projects.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the verdict against Clearcircle Environmental (NI) Limited that have recently been found guilty of polluting Lough Neagh, given that they hold the contract to process glass waste for arc21.

(AQW 55175/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Clearcircle Environmental (NI) Limited holds a number of waste authorisations for operations across Northern Ireland. Holders of such authorisations must be 'fit and proper persons' and part of this test requires that convictions for specified offences are considered by the Department.

The Department has considered the recent conviction of Clearcircle Environmental (NI) Limited under its Policy on Specified Offences and is satisfied that the company remains a suitable person to hold the authorisations in question.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the tariffs for newly installed taxi meters; and the criteria for setting the tariffs.

(AQW 55198/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The model for the maximum fare allows for three different flag drop fares (£3 for 6am-8pm Monday-Friday, £3.40 for 8pm-6am Monday-Thursday, and £4.20 for weekends), £0.20 for every 224 yards travelled or for each 73 seconds while the vehicle is stationary, the addition of tolls and other direct charges, the addition of £1 to the flag drop for the 5th and each additional passenger, and a maximum soiling charge of £75. The fare is broadly in line with the current regulated fare for Belfast Public Hire vehicles. It should be noted that the fare is a maximum fare and drivers can choose to use reduced tariffs in their taximeters. This is particularly pertinent in rural areas. The Department is currently making two amendments to the maximum tariff in relation to the waiting time and an enhanced fare to cover the Christmas and New Year periods. These changes have been accepted by the Environment Committee and will be relayed to the industry in early course.

PA Consulting Services/Transport Research Institute carried out research on behalf of the Department in both rural and urban areas of Northern Ireland on the costs of providing a taxi service. The analysis identified the key elements that contribute to taxi driver costs, such as; fuel, vehicle capital & maintenance, insurance and of course the labour cost of the taxi driver and how these could be recouped to reflect the cost of supply. The tariff then is constructed to recoup these costs using a charge for distance and time and also provides for an unsociable hours premium (e.g. night times and weekends), an extra passenger allowance, direct journey expenses (airport parking tolls etc) and a soiling charge.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how much funding he has provided to the community and voluntary sector (i) in actual terms; and (ii) as a proportion of his overall budget, in each of the last three years, including the projected spend for the current financial year.

(AQW 55212/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The funding provided by my Department to the community and voluntary sector is detailed below.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16 projected	Total
Funding for community and voluntary sector	3,628,274	3,266,606	3,601,445	3,433,708	13,930,033
Proportion of Budget	2.76%	2.54%	2.75%	2.78%	2.71%

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to prevent (i) river; and (ii) beach and coastal pollution in North Down.

(AQW 55236/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Water Framework Directive (WFD), Second Cycle River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) for the North Eastern River Basin District, which includes the North Down Constituency area, were published in December 2015. The plans set out the latest assessment of the status on the water environment in the area setting out objectives for 2021 and the proposed diffuse and point source pollution reduction measures required to meet those objectives. The measures identified, building on on-going programmes, will continue to act towards the prevention and reduction of both river and coastal water pollution in North Down. Further details on the North Eastern River Basin District Plan are available at <https://www.doeni.gov.uk/topics/water/river-basin-management#toc-1>.

NIEA continues to investigate and prevent further impact in respect of water pollution incidents reported via the Water Pollution Hotline or discovered by staff during their routine duties. Approximately 2000 water pollution reports are investigated each year and, where appropriate, formal enforcement action is initiated in line with the agency's Enforcement Policy. 286 water pollution incidents have been investigated in the North Down area in the inclusive period 2011 to 2015.

A significant water quality problem that impacts the groundwaters, rivers and lakes of Northern Ireland, extending into the surrounding coastal waters relates to nutrient enrichment arising from too much nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) entering the water environment. Under the Nitrates Action Programme 2015 – 2018 and Phosphorus Regulations, NIEA staff aim to improve water quality by protecting water against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources through the promotion of better management of animal manures, chemical nitrogen fertilisers and other nitrogen-containing materials spread onto land. Across NI each year, between 300 and 400 full 'cross compliance' farm inspections are carried out to ensure the legislation is being complied with. Where breaches of legislative requirements are identified, remediation is sought and a farmer may lose a portion of the 'single farm payment' they receive by way of a civil penalty or, where there is significant pollution impact, prosecution proceedings may be initiated. In 2015, the selection of farms for full 'cross compliance' inspection included a weighting in respect of NI Bathing Waters, meaning that more farms were selected in those areas. North Down's Ballyholme Bathing Water was taken into consideration in that process.

In respect of the Bathing Water at Ballyholme, pollution from agriculture and rural sources, combined with mis-connections in the urban area, have been identified as the main risk to the bathing water quality. This being the case, NIEA have undertaken an on-going project in the bathing water catchment to better identify the sources of the microbial loading and to determine further actions required to minimise the future risk of failure.

Education is a critical element in the reduction of water pollution in the North Down area as well as in NI as a whole. NIEA 'pollution prevention' staff aim to reduce the number of water pollution incidents and the impact of human activities on the environment by offering advice proactively to ensure appropriate pollution control measures are in place during both construction and operational phases of proposed projects and plans. NIEA works closely with other UK environmental regulators and other organisations to produce written advice such as CIRIA guides and the well known Pollution Prevention

Guidelines (PPGs). Staff work with trade organisations such as the Quarry Products Association, NI Fire and Rescue Service, OFTEC, the Oil Care Campaign, Tanksafe (Domestic Oil Tanks) and NI Direct in order to help educate people and organisations to understand and manage potentially polluting material they may hold and use. NIEA also supports pollution reduction programmes of external organisations such as those led by Northern Ireland Water regarding the flushing of inappropriate materials into the sewerage system which can lead to blockages which can lead to polluting overflows of untreated sewage to waterways. All of these initiatives act, across NI, to reduce the number and impact of incidents.

A key role for NIEA is in the provision of advice to 'planning' with the aim of encouraging environmentally sustainable development minimising water pollution risk. This type of advice acts to both prevent incidents from occurring through consideration of pre-planned mitigation measures and to minimise the impact of incidents or accidents that may occur.

NIEA regulates point sources under the Water Order 1999 and the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations 2013, setting conditions and standards within Consents and Permits which take account of the risk to the receiving water. These standards are set to ensure there is no deterioration in the receiving waterway. The NIEA applies a robust regulatory approach to ensure that the requirements of consents and permits are met. If the non-compliance is minor we will concentrate on fixing the problem to prevent further impacts to the water body. In more serious cases, the NIEA will move to gather the evidence which can lead to prosecution.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of departmental staff, broken down by business area, that have been reported to the PSNI in the last five years for neglect of, or intentional failure to fulfil their public obligation or duty.

(AQW 55249/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment has reported four departmental staff from the Planning and Road Safety Group to the PSNI in the last five years for alleged neglect of, or intentional failure to fulfil their public obligation or duty.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of staff that have availed of the Voluntary Exit Scheme in each tranche (a) in his Department; (b) its arm's-length bodies; including (c) their grade; and (d) whether they were part time or full time staff.

(AQW 55258/11-16)

Mr Durkan: A total of 308 staff in the Department of the Environment availed of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme. The eligibility requirements for the Scheme were based on the applicant's permanent NICS employee status. Consequently staff from the Department's Arms-length Bodies were not eligible to apply to the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

A detail of the Department's voluntary exits under the Scheme, by each tranche including their grade and their working arrangement (i.e. full time or part time) is set out in the Table 1 attached.

Table 1

Grade	Tranche 1 Exits at 30 September 2015			Tranche 2 Exits at 30 November 2015			Tranche 3 Exits at 31 January 2016		
	Total	Full-time	Part time	Total	Full-time	Part time	Total	Full-time	Part time
Senior Civil Servant									
SCS	2	1	1	1	1				
Grade 6									
Divisional manager (g6)				1		1			
Senior principal (g6)	1	1		1	1				
Senior principal legal officer (g6)									
Sp scientific officer (g6)	2	1	1	1	1				
Grade 7									
Accountant (grade7)									
Ppto landscape architect	1	1							
Principal scientific officer (g7)	2	2		1	1				
Principal	8	5	3	5	5				
Deputy Principal									
Curatorial Grade D	1	1							
Deputy Principal information officer	1	1							

Grade	Tranche 1 Exits at 30 September 2015			Tranche 2 Exits at 30 November 2015			Tranche 3 Exits at 31 January 2016		
	Total	Full-time	Part time	Total	Full-time	Part time	Total	Full-time	Part time
Deputy Principal	8	6	2	10	7	3	7*	6*	1
Senior scientific officer	4	1	3	9	9		1		1
Spto (architect)									
Spto (landscape architect)									
Spto (planning officer)	1	1							
Staff Officer									
Higher Photographic Officer	1		1						
Higher Scientific Officer	7	4	3	7	4	3	3	2	1
Hpto manager	1		1						
Ict level 5							2	2	
Staff Officer	6	2	4	11	7	4	10	8	2
Supervising Examiner									
Executive Officer 1									
Assistant Information Officer									
Executive Officer i	5	4	1	6	6		9	5	4
ICT level 4							2	1	1
Pto (landscape arch assistant)							1	1	
Pto graphic designer				1		1			
Pto warden	1	1							
Pto							1	1	
Scientific officer	3	3		1	1				
Senior traffic examiner (eo1)				1	1				
Executive Officer 2									
Enforcement officer				1	1				
Executive Officer ii	5	3	2	5	4	1	9	5	4
Personal Secretary	1	1					1	1	
Administrative Officer									
Administrative Officer	21	9	12	17	6	11	35	14	21
Assistant Warden	1	1					2	2	
Field Monument Warden				1		1			
Mapper				1	1				
Administrative Assistant									
Administrative Assistant	1	1		3	3		3	3	
Support Grade Band 2	1	1					1	1	
Typist							1	1	
Industrial Staff	6	6		6	4	2	4	3	1
Career Break	10	7	3	16	13	3	9	7	2
Grand Total	101	64	37	106	76	30	101	63	38

* 1 Tranche 4 Exit at 31 March 16

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, following the introduction of taxi metering, to detail the steps he will take to mitigate against the issues faced by taxi operators and passengers in towns such as Coleraine, where the immediate proximity of railway crossing barriers to a bus or rail station causes prolonged delays.

(AQW 55267/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department made regulations governing the use of taximeters in taxis in December 2015, with the various provisions coming into effect from May 2016. The specific issue of railway crossings has not been raised with me before, but of course many areas throughout the North will be affected by significant traffic congestion depending on the time of day. You will wish to note that the fares included in the recent Regulations are maximum fares and the driver has the ability to charge less than the fare if they wish to do so to take account of circumstances which could interrupt the customer's journey. I am also aware that traffic congestion has a financial impact on taxi operators and drivers. Following recent engagement with the taxi industry by my officials I have instructed them to amend the waiting time element of the taxi tariff for all taxis operating in the North to match that currently regulated for Belfast Public Hire, which is approximately £13.40 per hour. I am confident this change will ensure taxi operators and driver are adequately recompensed for waiting time.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has considered the reintroduction of animal species that are no longer found locally; and if so, to detail those species.

(AQW 55268/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department has only been involved in, or asked to licence one reintroduction programme, the RSPB's programme to accelerate the recolonization of the Red Kite to Northern Ireland in 2008 by translocating birds from another part of the UK. From 2008-2011 around 80 kites were brought into Northern Ireland from Wales, where a very healthy population of Red Kites already exists.

There are no current proposals for further introductions of red kites or other animals into Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning application A/2011/0246/F, why no case officer report or notice has been made available on the planning portal, or formal notification received by River Faughan Anglers, despite this application having been referred to the Planning Appeals Commission for a hearing.

(AQW 55308/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Notice of Opinion and Final Development Management Report were made available on the Planning Portal on 11 January 2016. However a minor system issue caused both documents to be displayed within the "Additional Documentation" document group rather than the "Planning Decisions and Reports" document group. This issue has been resolved and the documents are now available to view in the appropriate document group.

Pursuant to Section 29 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 the applicant requested an opportunity to appear before the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) following my opinion to refuse the application. The timetabling for any such hearing and the notification to interested parties is a matter for the PAC. I understand that the PAC has now made arrangements for the hearing.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to protect endangered wildlife species.

(AQW 55323/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department, through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, undertakes a variety of actions to protect endangered wildlife species. These include:

evidence gathering to help identify species and habitats which require legal protection or listing as Northern Ireland priority species; the declaration and management of areas of land across Northern Ireland, as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) for retaining high quality habitat for such species into the future, in the wider countryside; and regulation of activities such as planning and development to help address the needs of such species and engagement with the public to inform people about the conservation requirements for species and the law as it relates to wildlife.

I also personally chair the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime Northern Ireland (PAWNI) group. This cross-sectoral group brings together organisations with a common interest in the protection of wildlife and in addressing the wide range of wildlife crimes which occur in Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has any plans to give local councils enforcement powers to address the issue of bins that are permanently placed on public footways and obstructing pedestrians.

(AQW 55339/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Articles 21 and 22 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 (the 1997 Order) provide that for the purpose of facilitating the emptying of waste receptacles, they may be placed on a road, including a footpath, and that this should only take place where the Department has given its consent to this through the District Council. Failure to comply with any requirements imposed shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding Level 3 on the standard scale. The Department has no current plans to review this.

As these requirements relate specifically to the placement of bins on the footpath or roadway solely to facilitate waste collection, any bins placed on a publicly adopted area at any other time, fall outside of these provisions and would be the responsibility of DRD.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to give councils greater enforcement powers to address fly tipping.
(AQW 55340/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department amended the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to introduce provisions that would provide district councils with similar powers to the Department in relation to addressing fly-tipping.

However, before commencing these powers it was necessary for the Department and councils to work together to develop a set of operational arrangements that would establish clear practical roles and responsibilities between the NIEA and the district councils.

After a series of detailed negotiation with councils, a Fly-tipping Partnership Agreement document was developed. This Agreement will be considered for final sign-off by the councils over the next few months following which commencement of the powers can take place.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department plans to give councils more power to address nuisance noise.
(AQW 55342/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department considers that district councils have considerable powers, particularly with regard to night time noise introduced via the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 introduced new powers in relation to the control of noise. These new powers include extending the statutory nuisance provisions and a district council designating all or part of their district as an alarm notification area. As of 31 March 2015 no councils have designated alarm notification areas since the legislation was introduced.

Where certain criteria are met, the legislation also enables an authorised officer, to take whatever steps necessary to silence an alarm. To date these powers have only been used by four councils: Belfast City Council, Limavady Borough Council, Coleraine Borough Council and Carrickergus Borough Council.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 also extended the range of premises against which a council can take action under the Noise Act 1996 as well as extending the Noise Act 1996 to all district councils in Northern Ireland from April 2012. The Noise Act 1996 allows council officers to issue warning and fixed penalty notices, and in certain circumstances, to seize noise making equipment from premises emitted between 11pm and 7am. The 2014/15 year was the third year that these powers were available to all councils. Only Belfast City, Coleraine Borough and Ards Borough Councils have made use of these powers.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the ABO Wind Farm Application P/2015/0218/F.
(AQW 55354/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I have hosted a number of meetings with interested parties in terms of the Gruggandoo Wind Farm, including objectors to the scheme, the applicant (ABO Wind NI Ltd) and landowners with a financial interest in the proposal.

My officials are currently in the process of finalising the development management report and recommendation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment following the case of concealment of asbestos at Moira Drive, Bangor, to detail what consideration he has given to a review of the sanctions available in relation to an environmental crime of this nature.
(AQW 55362/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Under Article 4 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 (the 1997 Order), anyone who illegally deposits waste is guilty of an offence. Any individual (that is, anyone other than an establishment or undertaking) who commits an offence under this Article is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or, on conviction on indictment, to an unlimited fine. This would apply to what would be regarded as the more serious breaches of legislation.

In addition to the 1997 Order, the Hazardous Waste Regulations (NI) 2005 (the 2005 Regulations) set out specific requirements for anyone who makes a deposit of hazardous waste whether by way of storage or disposal in or on land, including notifying the Department of such an activity and keeping the required records. Failure to do so is an offence and the 2005 Regulations also set out the various actions available to the Department in dealing with such offences, including the power to issue fixed penalty notices instead of seeking conviction in the Courts.

Fixed penalty notices (FPN) will only be issued if the issuing officer believes that there is sufficient, admissible evidence to support a successful prosecution. Payment of the fixed penalty offers the offender the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction.

The Department is of the opinion that the current provisions in the 1997 Order and the 2005 Regulations combined, allow the Department to deal with the illegal deposit and storage of asbestos waste in a way that is proportionate to the crime. Accordingly, there are no plans currently to introduce further sanctions by way of new legislation in relation to asbestos waste.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department position that the breeding months of grey seals is between September and December and their moulting season between December and May, as is the position of the Sea Mammal Research Unit.

(AQW 55363/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department can confirm that the breeding season for grey seals is between September and December. The Sea Mammal Research Unit was commissioned to undertake aerial surveys of the Northern Ireland grey seal breeding colonies in 2002 and 2005. In both years, surveys were conducted during the months of October and November and found that the timing of the breeding season differs between the colonies.

Surveys undertaken as part of my Department's annual monitoring programme support these conclusions. The number of grey seal pups in Strangford Lough appears to peak in early October, while pups have been observed at the Maidens in December.

My Department agrees the timing of the grey seal moulting season is between December and May. However, grey seals do not haul out during the moult period to the same extent as harbour seals, so their moult period has not been targeted for counts in the way that the Department undertakes moult counts for harbour seals in August.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether the importation of materials on to the exploratory drill site at Woodburn Forest requires a licence from his Department; and if so, whether such a licence has been granted.

(AQW 55365/11-16)

Mr Durkan: There is no requirement per se for a licence from my Department to import certain materials onto a site. Any materials imported onto the site will require a waste authorisation from my Department, either a waste management licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) under the requirements of The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, or a waste exemption (for certain lower risk, lower impact activities) issued by NIEA in accordance with Regulations 17 to 20, and Schedule 2 of The Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003; whichever is appropriate given the nature of the activity.

NIEA has not received any applications for a waste authorisation at this site, nor has it received any complaints that waste is being deposited.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on (i) Equality Impact Assessments; and (ii) public consultations in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55401/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Due to effective equality screening carried out by my officials, my Department has not had to carry out any Equality Impact Assessments in each of the last three years and therefore no associated costs were incurred.

In relation to public consultations, the table below outlines my Department's spend in each of the last three financial years.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Costs associated with public consultations	£39,191	£11,935	£6,445

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55402/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The spend on consultants in each of the following financial years from 2011-12 to 2014-15 is as follows;

	14-15	13-14	12-13	11-12
DOE	£128,700	£461,474	£650,352	£414,602
ALBs	-	1,000	£1,860	-

The year to date spend on consultants from April 2015 to December 2015 by the department and its arm's length bodies is £45,450 and NIL respectively.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of the Environment whether taxis must have a meter fitted and use it, or just have a meter fitted.

(AQW 55454/11-16)

Mr Durkan: All Class A and Class B taxis must have a DOE approved taximeter and printer installed by 31 May 2016. The driver must commence operation of the taximeter on commencement of the journey and cease operation of the taximeter on completion of the journey. The fare demanded by the driver must not exceed the amount displayed on the taximeter.

Within the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the Taximeter Regulations), which come into operation on 31 May 2016, there are two exemptions from using the metered fare. The first exemption is where the taxi is being used to provide an executive service (the carriage of passengers in connection with a corporate, ceremonial or prestige booking) or a tour service.

The second exemption is where the taxi is used to provide a service for a health and social care body as defined in section 1(5) of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 or the Education Authority established under the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

My Department has recently amended the Taximeter Regulations by adding a third exemption. This additional exemption exists when there is agreement between the passenger and the operator, in advance of the journey, that the distance to be travelled by the taxi when empty will exceed the distance of the passenger's journey and the passenger waives the right to have the fare calculated by the taximeter and agrees the fare for the journey.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the changes or differences in planning policy relating to mining for precious metals in Northern Ireland, both before and after the introduction of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement in September 2015.

(AQW 55456/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As the Member will be aware the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) which I published in September last year, is a shorter, simpler, and more strategic planning policy framework for all users of the new two-tier planning system, which became operational on 1 April 2015.

The SPPS consolidates, updates where appropriate, and reflects in a strategic way, the provisions of planning policy statements that prevailed under the previous unitary planning system, including the relevant provisions of 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' (PSRNI). In relation to minerals policy, including my Department's approach to valuable minerals, the SPPS carries forward the general approach previously set out within the PSRNI. A comparison of both documents shows that the wording of the SPPS is closely aligned with that of the PSRNI.

It is also worth noting that under the transitional arrangements set out within the SPPS, planning policy documents such as the PSRNI, are retained during a transitional period whilst councils bring forward the Plan Strategy element of their Local Development Plans.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all the listed buildings in North Down.

(AQW 55457/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I provided this information on 15 March 2016 in answer to your AQW 53891/11-16.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment, given the UN Document, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all member states to develop national strategies on sustainable development goals as soon as possible and to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, to detail the plans he has to revise the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy and the accompanying action plan to meet these requirements.

(AQW 55488/11-16)

Mr Durkan: I welcome the publication of Transforming Our World and fully support the United Nations overall objective of shifting the world onto a more sustainable, peaceful and resilient path. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are wide ranging and cut across the responsibility of my Ministerial colleagues and the work of their departments.

The Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy set out a range of measures designed to mainstream sustainability into the work of Departments. In addition, the Executive identified sustainable development as a key, cross-cutting principle of its current Programme for Government. Future work to build on these measures will be a matter for the incoming Executive following the next Assembly election.

At present the policy lead for Sustainable Development rests with OFMDFM, however this responsibility will transfer to the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in May this year.

In the run up to the transfer of responsibilities officials will be meeting with OFMDFM colleagues to better understand how they have been engaging on Transforming Our World and also on progressing the overall sustainable development agenda to date. These discussions will provide an insight into the OFMDFM view, and help inform thinking, on how sustainable development should be taken forward by the new department, across the wider NICS and beyond.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how much annual funding his Department provides the Woodland Trust.

(AQW 55515/11-16)

Mr Durkan: For the 2015-16 financial year a total of £89,388 was offered to the Woodland Trust via the Natural Environment Fund.

For 2016-17 £40,000 has been offered to the Trust via the new Environment Fund.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment , pursuant to AQW 54627/11-16, to detail the number of times his Department's Ministerial Planning Group have met since the transfer of planning functions to local government.
(AQW 55519/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As I advised previously, my Department supports councils through various engagement groups, one of which is the Ministerial Planning Group, which I chair. This group has met on two occasions since the transfer of planning to local government in April 2015. The inaugural meeting was held on 14th December 2015 and the group met again for a second time on 8th March 2016.

These meetings have been extremely useful in bringing central and local government together to discuss and drive forward continuous improvement and best practice in planning and I would hope that this collaborative and constructive engagement continues into the future.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment , pursuant to AQW 55136/11-16, to detail how his Department communicated with individual taxi drivers and operators to advise them of the new taximeter requirements.
(AQW 55520/11-16)

Mr Durkan: My Department issued a taxi driver communication bulletin to all industry stakeholders for whom they held email addresses and hard copies of the bulletin were posted to all taxi drivers in February 2016.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department intends to challenge the legal proceedings issued by Tamboran against the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.
(AQW 55521/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As you are aware, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is currently the subject of legal proceedings. The SPPS is presumed to be valid in law, pending any decision of a Court to the contrary. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this matter.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will review the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy and accompanying action plan in the new Programme for Government to better reflect the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
(AQW 55585/11-16)

Mr Durkan: As I stated in my response to your priority written question AQW 55488-11-16 the policy lead for Sustainable Development currently rests with OFMDFM, until its transfer to the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in May this year.

I also advised that in the run up to the transfer of responsibilities officials would be meeting with OFMDFM colleagues to better understand how the current Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy and its accompanying action plan have been progressed, and that this would assist in informing how the UN Sustainable Development Goals should be taken forward by the new department, across the wider NICS and beyond.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment , pursuant to AQW 51456/11-16, whether a date has been set for a review of the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
(AQW 55598/11-16)

Mr Durkan: In my response to AQW 51456/11-16 in December 2015, I advised that it was my intention to undertake a review of the High Hedges Act once sufficient time has been given to allow its full implementation within the new council structures and my Department is able to free sufficient resources to allow this to proceed. That position, along with my hope that the review can move forward as soon as practically possible, remains unchanged.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether the scope and arrangements for neighbourhood notifications will be the same throughout Northern Ireland following the devolution of planning powers; or whether each council will have flexibility in its operation.
(AQW 55599/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The statutory requirements for neighbour notification of applications for planning permission are set out in the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 ("the GDPO") and apply equally to all councils.

When a council receives an application for planning permission it must notify any identified occupier on neighbouring land and supply all the information about the application required by Article 8(2) of the GDPO.

The statutory requirements of the GDPO represent the minimum requirement which all councils must satisfy. It would be a matter for individual councils if they wished to go beyond these requirements within their own council areas.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of (i) full time; and (ii) part time qualified doctors employed by the Driver and Vehicle Agency.
(AQW 55603/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency does not employ any full time or part time qualified doctors.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment what secure facilities exist within his Department for storing the private and confidential medical records of individuals, specifically elderly people, that are retained as requested by the CEO of the Driver and Vehicle Agency.

(AQW 55604/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Medical information and associated reports provided to the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) in connection with an application for a driving licence are treated as confidential with access controls to ensure that only those staff who have a business need to view them have access to them and, where expert medical opinion is required to assess the application, by the staff in the Occupational Health Service (OHS) or consultants contracted to OHS to provide specialist medical advice.

Application forms and associated reports under consideration are stored in approved security filing cabinets that are accessible only by those staff who work in the Medical and Vocational sections. Once an application has been determined, the forms are scanned to a secure file repository with access limited to those staff who have a business need to view them.

All staff working in the Medical & Vocational Section are required to sign a confidentiality declaration which prohibits the unauthorised access to, or disclosure of, sensitive personal data, including medical records. This declaration is in addition to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Data Security Policy and the NICS Code of Ethics. All staff are given appropriate training to ensure that they carry out their duties in accordance with the Data Protection Act and supporting Departmental policies. OHS doctors and staff are required to sign and adhere to a separate confidentiality agreement.

Medical records are retained in accordance with the DVA Medical Records Retention and Disposal Schedule. Where paper records are identified for destruction, they are destroyed by the contractor appointed under the NICS destruction of confidential waste contract and electronic records are deleted.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 52500/11-16, to detail the number of taxi driver licence holders currently registered as Uber drivers.

(AQW 55612/11-16)

Mr Durkan: There are currently 83 licensed taxi drivers affiliated to UBER's Taxi Operator's Licence. A driver can only be affiliated to a Taxi Operator's Licence when they have been granted a Taxi Driver's Licence.

Note: The figures are provided from the Driver & Vehicle Agency's computer records and do not form part of published and validated DOE National Statistics.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment to detail how his Department will enforce rooftop signs on taxis displaying to the rear the correct information as required under the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

(AQW 55613/11-16)

Mr Durkan: Under the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 all Class A and Class B taxis are required to have a roof sign which shall display to the front either the name or trading name of the licensed operator, or the word 'Taxi', and to the rear either a telephone number or the word 'Taxi'.

The Driver & Vehicle Agency has primary responsibility for enforcing taxi regulations and where an enforcement officer detects any taxi with a non-compliant roof sign, a number of sanctions are available ranging from advice and warning for a first minor non-compliance to issuing a defect notice or a fixed penalty to the driver for repeated or blatant non-compliance. There is no operator offence associated with the display of non-compliant roof signs.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment why the Driver and Vehicle Agency office in Coleraine and the Planning Office in Craigavon do not provide post boxes that can be used by applicants that want to deliver documents when the buildings are closed to the public.

(AQW 55626/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Driver Licensing Division of the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) is located in County Hall, Coleraine. The building is a shared building managed by the Department for Regional Development.

The DVA offers a public counter facility at County Hall which operates Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) 09.15 to 16.00. When the public office is closed, customers can access the building between 0900 and 1700 and during these times there is a secure internal post box where customers can leave applications or associated documents. However outside of these hours, while there is a 24 hour security presence, there is no facility to leave documents for the DVA (or any other occupants of the site).

While it may be possible to provide a post box on the perimeter of the County Hall site, the DVA could not secure such a post box and, therefore, could not take responsibility for the security or the cost of replacement of documents left in a facility outside of its control, or the issues associated with claims of cash having been left in the post box.

For customer wishing to avail of secure delivery options the Royal Mail offers a number of services designed to facilitate the secure delivery of documents via the postal service.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many people have been prosecuted for littering in each of the last three years, broken down by council area.

(AQW 55634/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The figures obtained from councils in respect of successful prosecutions in the courts for littering offences are detailed in the attached table.

Councils also deal with litter offenders by issuing fixed penalty notices as an alternative to seeking prosecution through the courts. Over the past three financial years 12,338 fixed penalty notices were issued by councils for littering offences.

New Council District	Council District	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Antrim	0	0	1
	Newtownabbey	4	4	5
Mid & East Antrim	Ballymena	0	0	2
	Carrickfergus	0	0	0
	Larne	2	0	0
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Armagh	0	0	0
	Banbridge	0	0	0
	Craigavon	41	4	55
Belfast	Belfast	44	59	59
Causeway Coast & Glens	Ballymoney	0	0	0
	Coleraine	1	5	0
	Limavady	1	0	2
	Moyle	0	0	0
Derry City & Strabane	Derry City	0	21	0
	Strabane	0	0	0
Fermanagh & Omagh	Fermanagh	0	0	11
	Omagh	2	0	0
Mid Ulster	Cookstown	1	0	1
	Dungannon & South Tyrone	0	0	1
	Magherafelt	0	0	0
Newry, Mourne & Down	Down	8	2	0
	Newry & Mourne	0	0	0
North Down & Ards	Ards	0	0	2
	North Down	1	0	0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Castlereagh	1	10	6
	Lisburn	0	0	0
Totals		106	105	145

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has undertaken, or plans to undertake, any studies into endangered wildlife species.

(AQW 55635/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Department has a long track record of undertaking studies or evidence gathering on endangered wildlife species.

Officials routinely gather data on a broad range of wildlife species. Such evidence can form part of one off studies; be part of longer term, ongoing, monitoring activities e.g. wildfowl or seal surveillance; be information gained from other science experts outside the Department or form part of specially commissioned research projects. The Department also has strategic partnerships which facilitate the involvement of the citizen with recording of species.

Since the mid-80s, the focus has been wildlife species that are considered a conservation priority. Such species include those protected under domestic legislation e.g. Wildlife Order, or for which we have an international responsibility e.g. species

in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive. The recent Article 17 report is a particular focus for current and future evidence gathering. New studies are proposed on an ongoing basis and commissioned subject to priority and resource availability.

Domestic legislation, Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order, and the European Habitats Directive, provide a statutory authority for the Department to be involved in such activities, including the funding of projects. Notably with the Habitats Directive, there is an expectation that the member state “encourages” relevant research.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the requirements for motorcycles to complete a MOT.
(AQW 55636/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the related Motor Vehicle Testing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 provide for the testing and certification (MOT) of motorcycles from 4 years old and annually thereafter.

Information relating to the testing procedures and standards for examiners carrying out the inspection of motor cycles, which runs to some 75 pages, is available on the DOE internet, and can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.doeni.gov.uk/publications/motor-bicycle-inspection-manual>

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning enforcement cases have been taken to court in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55640/11-16)

Mr Durkan: The table below sets out the figures for planning prosecutions initiated in the last 5 full years (2010/11 to 2014/15).

Planning prosecutions¹ initiated 2010/11 to 2014/15

Financial year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of prosecutions	90	131	145	72	35

Notes:

1 Refers to the number of cases during the period where it has been decided to initiate court action, i.e. send to the solicitor.

The number of prosecutions initiated refers to the number of cases for which it has been decided to initiate court action. It should be noted that not all cases for which it is decided to initiate court action necessarily result in being taken to court. For example the case may be successfully resolved before it reaches court.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of agency staff employed in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and at what cost; and (ii) how these figures have changed in the last five years.

(AQW 54526/11-16)

Mr Storey (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Figures for the numbers of agency staff employed in the NICS and the related cost over the last five years is set out in the table below. These figures are based on annual figures.

Year	Total Agency Staff	Total Cost
1 February 2015 – Present	1090	£10,197,381
1 February 2014 – 31 January 2015	952	£9,165,465
1 February 2013 – 31 January 2014	1132	£12,188,205
1 December 2011* – 31 January 2013	1242	£14,379,743

* The contract commenced on the 1 December 2011.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54607/11-16)

Mr Storey: DFP was the Northern Ireland accountable department for funding delivered under several elements of the 2000-2006 INTERREG IIIA and PEACE II Programmes and the 2007-13 INTERREG IV and PEACE III Programmes, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Under these elements of the programmes, between 2005/06 and 2014/15, expenditure of £41,242,684.06 was incurred by projects with addresses within the South Belfast Parliamentary Constituency. Details are provided in the following tables.

The PEACE and INTERREG programmes are cross-border programmes, and the figures shown represent expenditure by project lead partners including both EU contributions and necessary match funding provided by DFP and relevant Irish accountable departments. DFP has no responsibility for unmatched European Union funding.

Due to the strategic nature of some projects funded under the programmes, addresses often relate to regional headquarters but it is unlikely that all elements of a project will be based in these headquarters. INTERREG promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring regions on different sides of the border. As a result, all approved projects are cross-border in nature. Therefore, the scope or impact of all projects will extend beyond the geographical location of the project itself and cannot be readily assigned to one Parliamentary Constituency.

DFP is accountable for Technical Assistance, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication. Due to the location of the headquarters of SEUPB and several programme implementing bodies within South Belfast, Technical Assistance expenditure has been included and identified within the return.

PEACE II Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
Action Mental Health	£15,000.00	£13,360.25	£15,776.60	£0.00	£0.00	£44,136.85
ArtsEkta	£0.00	£0.00	£53,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£53,000.00
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)	£0.00	£11,263.12	£18,167.54	£53,095.13	£0.00	£82,525.79
Ballynaveigh Community Development Association	£51,259.25	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£51,259.25
Barnardos Parenting Matters Project	£10,843.64	£470.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£11,313.64
Belfast City Council	£340,123.05	£157,235.95	£362,300.64	£218,044.54	£0.00	£1,077,704.18
Belfast GEMS- South Belfast Partnership	£198,132.25	£122,656.04	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£320,788.29
Belfast Local Strategy Partnership	£170,824.97	£86,758.34	£13,522.19	£15,940.65	£0.00	£287,046.15
Belvoir Community Association	£4,317.87	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£4,317.87
Blu Zebra Ltd	£29,807.00	£97,193.95	£116,182.45	£54,491.18	£0.00	£297,674.58
BMG Associates	£2,711.25	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,711.25
Bryson House	£0.00	£14,136.51	£55,674.14	£30,189.35	£0.00	£100,000.00
Carryduff Retirement Network	£0.00	£0.00	£7,380.08	£2,619.92	£0.00	£10,000.00
Castlereagh Borough Council	£9,533.69	£9,618.18	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£19,151.87
Castlereagh Local Strategy Partnership	£29,781.79	£36,309.54	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£66,091.33
Castlereagh Recycled Teenagers	£3,996.82	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,996.82
Chairs' Forum for Northern Ireland	£0.00	£18,282.80	£2,830.36	£0.00	£0.00	£21,113.16
Churches Peace Education Programme	£29,004.62	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£29,004.62
Citizens Advice Bureau Belfast	£0.00	£10,750.32	£113,314.50	£102,925.11	£0.00	£226,989.93
Citizens Advice Bureau Northern Ireland	£179,373.29	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£179,373.29
Citywide Women's Consortium	£93,082.44	£7,959.67	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£101,042.11

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
Comet Interreg IIIA Partnership	£141,560.84	£170,902.93	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£312,463.77
Community Foundation for NI	£79,405.18	£17,497.79	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£96,902.97
Consultancy Mentoring Works	£0.00	£0.00	£19,924.77	£9,365.19	£0.00	£29,289.96
Contact Youth Counselling Services	£0.00	£2,809.23	£29,842.77	£2,403.00	£0.00	£35,055.00
Co-operation Ireland	£51,961.96	£14,525.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£66,486.96
DFPF Ltd (trading as People 1st)	£58,358.11	£2,771.92	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£61,130.03
Dunfield Football Ltd	£195,790.49	£159,149.11	£143,250.80	£65,528.90	£0.00	£563,719.30
Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI	£0.00	£0.00	£342,681.90	£269,708.92	£0.00	£612,390.82
GEMS NI	£0.00	£6,950.59	£38,211.69	£44,106.07	£0.00	£89,268.35
Gingerbread NI	£63,596.60	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£63,596.60
Greater Belfast Community Network	£52,442.53	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£52,442.53
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	£329,802.84	£99,926.00	£68,958.31	£140,620.82	£0.00	£639,307.97
Hanwood Trust Company Limited	£66,960.24	£27,408.32	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£94,368.56
Horizon Ireland Ltd	£118,942.36	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£118,942.36
Junior Achievement Ireland Ltd	£38,713.82	£23,305.04	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£62,018.86
Locus Management	£15,892.35	£42,814.65	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£58,707.00
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	£0.00	£2,231.91	£56,118.67	£10,805.42	£0.00	£69,156.00
Mediation Northern Ireland	£113,429.58	£46,106.55	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£159,536.13
Mornington Community Project	£115,027.43	£16,386.69	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£131,414.12
Net-finity Ltd	£0.00	£23,693.65	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£23,693.65
Newtownbreda Primary School	£8,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£8,000.00
Newtownbreda United Churches	£2,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,000.00
NI. Pre-school Playgroups Assoc.	£35,493.78	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£35,493.78
NIPPA - The Early Years Organisation	£249,807.66	£195,805.69	£175,689.11	£88,641.04	£0.00	£709,943.50
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities	£58,077.86	£34,202.92	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£92,280.78
Northern Ireland Museums Council	£46,635.26	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£46,635.26
Panarts	£59,035.31	£14,907.41	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£73,942.72
Praxis Care Group	£69,959.62	£28,090.76	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£98,050.38
Public Achievement	£70,023.14	£22,640.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£92,663.14

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
Queen's University Belfast	£411,383.36	£185,765.46	£273,412.43	£199,780.07	£0.00	£1,070,341.32
Sandy Row Community Development Agency	£70,233.23	£53,283.25	£63,126.14	£35,675.87	£0.00	£222,318.49
Scout Association, Northern Ireland Scout Council	£70,777.15	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£70,777.15
Seymour Hill & Conway Community Network	£0.00	£12,279.56	£14,841.48	£3,620.96	£0.00	£30,742.00
Social Economy Solutions Ltd	£0.00	£8,452.27	£10,047.73	£0.00	£0.00	£18,500.00
South and East Belfast Trust	£87,177.51	£38,091.80	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£125,269.31
South Belfast Cultural Society	£28,566.77	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£28,566.77
South Belfast Partnership Board	£107,629.48	£80,870.59	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£188,500.07
Taughmonagh Community Forum Ltd	£87,435.30	£4,460.87	£26,950.13	£0.00	£0.00	£118,846.30
The Bridge Community Association	£23,929.60	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£23,929.60
The Educational Trust	£106,868.04	£0.00	£170,240.01	£83,648.95	£0.00	£360,757.01
The High/Scope Children's Centre	£42,624.81	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£42,624.81
The Open University	£98,668.77	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£98,668.77
The Open University in Ireland	£0.00	£43,325.67	£77,625.46	£53,614.67	£0.00	£174,565.80
The Orchardville Company Ltd	£28,068.17	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£28,068.17
The Orchardville Society	£47,361.29	£46,547.16	£35,589.07	£12,418.12	£0.00	£141,915.64
Time Associates (Ireland) Ltd	£341,914.54	£27,805.84	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£369,720.38
Tourism Training Trust	£52,317.30	£14,902.88	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£67,220.18
Ulster Community Investment Trust Ltd	£71,755.49	£75,692.65	£63,561.32	£81,488.50	£0.00	£292,497.95
Ulster Scots Agency	£0.00	£6,181.78	£68,636.41	£113,607.66	£0.00	£188,425.85
Victim Support Northern Ireland	£9,104.82	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£9,104.82
Youth Council for Northern Ireland	£70,204.10	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£70,204.10
YouthAction NI Ltd	£0.00	£62,599.46	£137,081.92	£91,699.63	£0.00	£291,381.01
Belfast Local Strategy Partnership *	£772,818.18	£518,326.95	£207,208.24	£154,494.16	£0.00	£1,652,847.53
Community Foundation for NI *	£729,726.00	£694,045.71	£395,474.49	£294,290.31	£0.00	£2,113,536.51
Community Relations Council *	£37,740.29	£13,117.30	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£50,857.59
Co-operation Ireland *	£350,000.00	£145,414.81	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£495,414.81

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
EGSA *	£209,849.00	£116,544.96	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£326,393.96
NI Community Relations Council *	£229,902.71	£341,839.00	£205,000.00	£153,750.00	£0.00	£930,491.71
NIPPA - The Early Years Organisation *	£235,672.20	£218,940.78	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£454,612.98
SEUPB *	£924,734.26	£751,314.88	£677,545.15	£927,297.55	£77,793.22	£3,358,685.06
Total	£8,455,171.26	£4,997,924.45	£4,059,166.50	£3,313,871.69	£77,793.22	£20,903,927.13

PEACE III Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Organisation	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
SEUPB *	£1,917,537.00	£1,215,247.56	£983,507.12	£998,939.61	£1,207,796.64	£1,216,721.60	£7,539,749.53
Total	£1,917,537.00	£1,215,247.56	£983,507.12	£998,939.61	£1,207,796.64	£1,216,721.60	£7,539,749.53

INTERREG IIIA Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
CTA (UK)	£19,402.67	£75,534.52	£40,139.36	£0.00	£135,076.55
IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council	£313,504.81	£175,596.80	£2,696.72	£0.00	£491,798.33
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland	£48,419.51	£30,048.01	£12,155.26	£0.00	£90,622.79
Socia.net Ltd	£46,933.65	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£46,933.65
Time Associates (Ireland) Ltd.	£0.00	£0.00	£23,854.34	£12,942.40	£36,796.74
COMET INTERREG Partnership *	£32,760.48	£51,441.13	£36,324.92	£35,204.58	£155,731.11
INTERREG IIIA Community Partnership *	£0.00	£20,586.50	£131,963.71	£59,636.55	£212,186.77
Research And Regional Services *	£0.00	£14,374.52	£4,771.64	£0.00	£19,146.16
Total	£461,021.12	£367,581.49	£251,905.95	£107,783.53	£1,188,292.09

INTERREG IVA Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Organisation	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
Action Mental Health	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£77,254.59	£90,218.41	£167,473.00
COMET Partnership	£0.00	£118,005.08	£86,052.01	£55,271.97	£655,394.21	£423,194.15	£1,337,917.42
RNIB Northern Ireland	£0.00	£112,377.48	£496,485.24	£447,274.58	£604,840.16	£7,846.93	£1,668,824.39
The Cedar Foundation	£0.00	£72,000.00	£108,348.72	£135,646.27	£108,287.25	£0.00	£424,282.24
SEUPB *	£1,813,075.40	£1,296,268.45	£1,156,726.79	£1,273,732.04	£1,313,504.09	£1,158,911.48	£8,012,218.26
Total	£1,813,075.40	£1,598,651.01	£1,847,612.76	£1,911,924.86	£2,759,280.30	£1,680,170.97	£11,610,715.31

* This expenditure relates to Technical Assistance, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication. In the case of the PEACE III Programme, DFP is only accountable for Technical Assistance.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when his Department will publish commitments specific to Northern Ireland for the 2016-18 UK Open Government Action Plan.

(AQW 54881/11-16)

Mr Storey: The UK Cabinet Office is currently leading on the development of the Third Open Government Partnership UK National Action Plan which is due to be published in May 2016.

Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD) within DFP are providing a central co-ordination and contact role, supported by other public sector colleagues, to progress Northern Ireland's regional input into the third national action plan.

This work has involved undertaking a programme of engagement with a range of representatives from civic society and public sector to seek input on potential NI commitments for the Action Plan.

I, along with my officials, am currently considering the outputs from these engagement activities.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54997/11-16)

Mr Storey: DFP was the Northern Ireland accountable department for funding delivered under several elements of the 2000-2006 INTERREG IIIA and PEACE II Programmes and the 2007-13 INTERREG IV and PEACE III Programmes, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Under these elements of the programmes, between 2005/06 and 2014/15, expenditure of £9,487,684.10 was incurred by projects with addresses within the West Tyrone Parliamentary Constituency. Details are provided in the following tables.

The PEACE and INTERREG programmes are cross-border programmes, and the figures shown represent expenditure recorded against project lead partners including both EU contributions and necessary match funding provided by DFP and relevant Irish accountable departments. DFP has no responsibility for unmatched European Union funding.

Due to the strategic nature of some projects funded under the programmes, addresses often relate to regional headquarters but it is unlikely that all elements of a project will be based in these headquarters. INTERREG promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring regions on different sides of the border. As a result, all approved projects are cross-border in nature. Therefore, the scope or impact of all projects will extend beyond the geographical location of the project itself and cannot be readily assigned to one parliamentary constituency.

PEACE II Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
3rd Tyrone Scouting Ireland CSI	£10,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£10,000.00
Aráis Arís ar an Omaigh	£10,820.00	£12,118.26	£0.00	£0.00	£22,938.26
Ballycolman Community Development Association	£3,015.58	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,015.58
Balor Developmental Community Arts Group Ltd	£0.00	£53,136.10	£122,449.82	£45,188.17	£220,774.09
Beragh Red Knights GAC	£0.00	£11,250.00	£0.00	£0.00	£11,250.00
Border Arts	£71,356.93	£24,400.00	£0.00	£0.00	£95,756.93
Bready Cricket Club	£0.00	£0.00	£100,000.00	£0.00	£100,000.00
Broughderg Area Development Association Limited	£0.00	£4,611.10	£4,809.89	£0.00	£9,420.99
Camowen Partnership Ltd	£0.00	£14,253.00	£0.00	£0.00	£14,253.00
Castlederg Childcare Services Ltd	£0.00	£0.00	£67,093.21	£15,179.79	£82,273.00
Churchtown Community Association	£0.00	£12,626.25	£55,571.65	£0.00	£68,197.90
Community Activity Partnership Ltd	£12,597.91	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£12,597.91
Deg Valley Care Ltd	£0.00	£0.00	£4,091.68	£48,426.86	£52,518.54
Dennett Interchange Ltd	£9,999.29	£0.00	£14,312.53	£5,687.47	£29,999.29
Derg Valley Properties Limited	£0.00	£0.00	£1,012.00	£0.00	£1,012.00
Derry and Raphoe Action	£122,191.77	£93,493.37	£114,433.78	£57,745.68	£387,864.60

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
Donemana Cricket Club	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£36,793.47	£36,793.47
Eskra Community Association Ltd	£16,522.50	£9,703.86	£0.00	£0.00	£26,226.36
Lisnally Regeneration Group	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£11,936.51	£11,936.51
Mary Gray Farm Services Ltd	£10,165.00	£279.01	£0.00	£20,078.40	£30,522.41
Mullaghmore & Castleview Community Association	£16,576.96	£5,870.01	£0.00	£0.00	£22,446.97
New Horizons Partnership	£20,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£20,000.00
Newtownstewart Development Association Ltd	£17,475.78	£3,489.06	£0.00	£0.00	£20,964.84
Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project	£15,409.14	£13,467.53	£25,908.77	£0.00	£54,785.44
Omagh Business Forum Ltd	£2,553.41	£26,786.43	£26,315.02	£36,128.66	£91,783.52
Omagh College of Further Education	£70,170.01	£23,834.33	£0.00	£0.00	£94,004.34
Omagh Community House Ltd	£0.00	£14,526.00	£0.00	£0.00	£14,526.00
Omagh Community Support Forum	£40,782.31	£28,000.57	£0.00	£0.00	£68,782.88
Omagh Culture, Arts and Leisure Consortium	£0.00	£29,241.40	£10,320.00	£13,082.99	£52,644.39
Omagh District Childcare Network	£22,754.25	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£22,754.25
Omagh District Council	£160,739.96	£15,568.56	£0.00	£0.00	£176,308.52
Omagh District Council Community Based Hydro Scheme	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£248,318.00	£248,318.00
Omagh Enterprise Company Ltd	£75,587.60	£20,000.52	£0.00	£0.00	£95,588.12
Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group	£15,459.22	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£15,459.22
Omagh Forum for Rural Associations (OFRA)	£40,458.99	£57,812.95	£9,498.06	£180.06	£107,950.06
Omagh Health and Wellbeing Consortium	£0.00	£25,740.94	£8,908.15	£11,885.05	£46,534.14
Omagh Local Strategy Partnership	£57,519.00	£48,182.00	£14,998.02	£0.00	£120,699.02
Omagh Sligo Partnership	£54,083.69	£28,580.19	£0.00	£0.00	£82,663.88
Omagh Support & Self Help Group	£15,188.05	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£15,188.05
Omagh/Sligo Joint Cultural Events Programme	£0.00	£6,272.98	£50,506.91	£51,222.99	£108,002.88
Owenkillew Community Development Association	£2,299.36	£9,282.37	£0.00	£1,272.65	£12,854.38
SEUPB	£25,683.23	£72,590.92	£17,419.38	£0.00	£115,693.53
Sirius Information Systems	£5,457.26	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,457.26
Sixmilecross Enterprise Ltd	£0.00	£2,920.40	£34,851.18	£5,027.19	£42,798.77
Sligo Vocational Education Committees	£0.00	£30,227.37	£119,872.85	£110,375.35	£260,475.57

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
Sollus School of Highland Dance	£0.00	£0.00	£21,625.00	£15,882.60	£37,507.60
South West College	£0.00	£0.00	£63,670.63	£59,266.92	£122,937.55
Sperrin Lakeland Crisis Management	£110,341.65	£67,857.94	£0.00	£0.00	£178,199.59
Strabane & District Caring Services	£0.00	£20,000.00	£70,395.00	£9,982.94	£100,377.94
Strabane & Lifford Women's Centre	£95,725.83	£88,255.90	£99,845.13	£73,219.88	£357,046.74
Strabane and District Community Network (S&DCN)	£0.00	£10,303.75	£47,724.60	£15,463.15	£73,491.50
Strabane Befriending & Counselling Association	£0.00	£67,756.75	£0.00	£0.00	£67,756.75
Strabane Community Work programme ltd	£0.00	£0.00	£61,824.02	£12,730.11	£74,554.13
Strabane District Council	£139,887.24	£64,014.38	£71,963.00	£300.00	£276,164.62
Strabane District Rural Transport Partnership	£11,786.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£11,786.00
Strabane Enterprise Agency	£81,782.78	£58,723.80	£0.00	£0.00	£140,506.58
Strabane Farmers Forum	£50,035.15	£46,973.06	£0.00	£0.00	£97,008.21
Strabane Lifford Angling Development Association	£1,942.67	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,942.67
Strabane Local Strategy Partnership	£103,998.40	£23,137.48	£68,406.06	£51,304.49	£246,846.43
Tara Counselling and Personal Development Company Ltd	£7,194.71	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£7,194.71
Teach na Failte	£69,816.56	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£69,816.56
TEDI Ltd	£101,192.05	£35,932.11	£0.00	£0.00	£137,124.16
The Drummond Centre	£0.00	£0.00	£3,909.55	£23,162.89	£27,072.44
The Pushkin Prizes Trust	£20,054.72	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£20,054.72
The Villages Together	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,196.90	£5,196.90
Tyrone Donegal Partnership	£264,341.37	£246,302.35	£116,985.53	£82,926.40	£710,555.65
Tyrone Economic Development Initiative	£48,138.49	£42,908.04	£0.00	£0.00	£91,046.53
Venture	£22,208.97	£15,434.33	£0.00	£0.00	£37,643.30
Venture International	£25,740.22	£43,703.48	£0.00	£0.00	£69,443.70
West Tyrone Voice	£21,166.29	£13,108.97	£0.00	£0.00	£34,275.26
Western Education and Library Board	£337,652.21	£96,509.17	£0.00	£0.00	£434,161.38
Western Education and Library Board/ Donegal County Council Library Service	£146,440.30	£37,430.25	£0.00	£0.00	£183,870.55
Youth Sport Omagh Ltd	£7,193.50	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£7,193.50
Total	£2,591,506.31	£1,676,617.24	£1,428,721.42	£1,067,965.57	£6,764,810.54

PEACE III Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Nil. DFP was only accountable for the Technical Assistance elements of PEACE III, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication.

INTERREG IIIA Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
Five Counties Holidays	£4,929.70	£620.69	£0.00	£0.00	£5,550.39
Mullaghmore House Enterprises	£76,631.38	£56,330.79	£0.00	£0.00	£132,962.17
New Horizons Partnership	£68,282.86	£81,824.07	£41,645.16	£0.00	£191,752.09
Omagh College of Further Education	£16,523.15	£20,406.80	£0.00	£0.00	£36,929.95
Omagh Enterprise Company Ltd.	£132,995.26	£153,944.05	£222,933.17	£72,417.72	£582,290.20
Soup Stone Productions Ltd	£19,028.34	£50,645.17	£56,586.03	£27,604.91	£153,864.45
South West College	£97,581.08	£81,887.95	£144,403.47	£367,100.74	£690,973.24
Strabane District Rural Transport Partnership T/A Easilift	£57,243.29	£24,832.54	£108,055.46	£22,834.53	£212,965.82
Total	£473,215.06	£470,492.06	£573,623.29	£489,957.90	£2,007,288.30

INTERREG IVA Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Organisation	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
South West College (SWC)	£100,000.00	£109,739.63	£256,880.51	£248,965.12	£0.00	£715,585.26
Total	£100,000.00	£109,739.63	£256,880.51	£248,965.12	£0.00	£715,585.26

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of sudden cardiac deaths of minors in each of the last ten years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 55021/11-16)

Mr Storey: The table overleaf gives the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland for each year and Trust between 2004 and 2014 where the primary cause of death was 'Sudden Cardiac Death'³.

Table 1: Number of deaths registered of minors¹ where Sudden Cardiac Death² was recorded as the primary cause of death by Health and Social Care Trust, 2005-2014

Health & Social Care Trust	Registration Year									
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Belfast HSCT		1								
Northern HSCT			1							
South Eastern HSCT										
Southern HSCT				1						
Western HSCT			1							
Northern Ireland	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

1 Minors refers to children under the age of 18.

2 Since 2001, in line with the rest of the UK, the tenth revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ICD10) is used to classify cause of death. The codes used for Sudden Cardiac Death included here are I46.1 & I49.9.

3 The coding of sudden cardiac death is not clearly defined in the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD 10). For the purposes of responding to this AQ the codes used for 'Sudden Cardiac Death' are I46.1 (Sudden cardiac death) and I49.9 (Cardiac arrhythmia, unspecified).

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) matched; and (ii) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and where the funding was spent.

(AQW 55149/11-16)

Mr Storey: DFP was the Northern Ireland accountable department for funding delivered under several elements of the 2000-2006 INTERREG IIIA and PEACE II Programmes and the 2007-13 INTERREG IV and PEACE III Programmes, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Under these elements of the programmes, between 2005/06 and 2014/15, expenditure of £27,390,582.10 was incurred by projects with addresses within the Foyle Parliamentary Constituency. Details are provided in the following tables.

The PEACE and INTERREG programmes are cross-border programmes, and the figures shown represent expenditure recorded against project lead partners including both EU contributions and necessary match funding provided by DFP and relevant Irish accountable departments. DFP has no responsibility for unmatched European Union funding.

Due to the strategic nature of some projects funded under the programmes, addresses often relate to regional headquarters but it is unlikely that all elements of a project will be based in these headquarters. INTERREG promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring regions on different sides of the border. As a result, all approved projects are cross-border in nature. Therefore, the scope or impact of all projects will extend beyond the geographical location of the project itself and cannot be readily assigned to one Parliamentary Constituency.

PEACE II Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total (£)
An Gaeláras Ltd.	£9,000.00	£1,636.71	£0.00	£0.00	£10,636.71
Áras Tar Abhaile/ATA Fitness	£99,988.98	£3,748.25	£0.00	£0.00	£103,737.23
Aware Defeat Depression	£3,241.92	£7,398.17	£0.00	£0.00	£10,640.09
BHCP	£56,312.34	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£56,312.34
Blast Furnace	£187.72	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£187.72
Business in the Community	£42,864.67	£7,549.64	£0.00	£0.00	£50,414.31
Business in the Community North West	£42,085.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£42,085.00
Claudy Rural Development Ltd	£44,040.43	£12,419.67	£0.00	£0.00	£56,460.10
Community Action Network	£0.00	£5,339.67	24,460.33	£0.00	£29,800.00
Co-operation and Working Together	£342,540.05	£87,757.63	£41,759.55	588,273.95	£1,060,331.18
Creggan Community Cafe and Catering Ltd	£126,586.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£126,586.00
Creggan Country Park Enterprises Ltd	£37,451.99	£25,264.19	£35,042.16	£0.00	£97,758.34
Creggan Enterprises Limited	£91,492.25	£114,138.39	117,123.47	18,817.31	£341,571.42
Creggan Pre-school and Training Trust Ltd	£43,314.24	£13,282.90	£0.00	£0.00	£56,597.14
Cresco Trust Ltd	£47,753.41	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£47,753.41
Cumann Gaelach Chnoc na Ros Doire	£72,915.15	£56,355.12	£66,590.88	£24,555.21	£220,416.36
CX3	£100,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£100,000.00
Derry Children's Commission	£22,468.84	£22,147.28	£83,891.79	£43,083.14	£171,591.05
Derry City Council	£253,821.06	£176,638.48	£240,221.87	£275,389.95	£946,071.36
Derry City Council/Shared City Project	£12,214.81	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£12,214.81
Derry Northside Development Trust	£0.00	£13,908.10	16,092.62	3,944.23	£33,944.95
Derry Travellers Support Group	£12,071.09	£2,228.76	£0.00	£0.00	£14,299.85

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total (£)
Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau	£41,950.24	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£41,950.24
Derry Well Woman	£136,397.21	£139,873.15	£140,475.11	£82,406.01	£499,151.48
Enterprise Ulster	£37,007.94	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£37,007.94
Foyle Connect Ltd	£18,509.46	£1,846.25	£0.00	£0.00	£20,355.71
Foyle Newpin	£20,736.09	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£20,736.09
Galliagh Development Trust	£0.00	£0.00	8,225.00	£0.00	£8,225.00
Galliagh Festival Committee	£2,619.02	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,619.02
Greater Shantallow Area Partnership	£45,239.38	£0.00	£22,057.78	£59,901.50	£127,198.66
Greater Shantallow Community Arts (T/A Galliagh Community Festival Committee)	£28,640.85	£23,559.83	£0.00	£0.00	£52,200.68
Guildhall Press	£13,912.07	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£13,912.07
Hillcrest House (Top of the Hill) Ltd	£23,923.79	£9,364.56	£0.00	£0.00	£33,288.35
Holywell Consultancy	£63,627.00	£21,145.30	£0.00	£0.00	£84,772.30
Holywell Trust	£90,181.52	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£90,181.52
International Business Centre	£4,693.58	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£4,693.58
Local Strategy Partnership Derry City Council area	£47,362.04	£76,908.95	£33,094.14	£10,806.34	£168,171.47
Londonderry Chamber of Commerce	£45,592.40	£28,199.02	40,373.73	9,445.85	£123,611.00
Londonderry YMCA	£0.00	£0.00	18,838.00	£0.00	£18,838.00
Maydown Youth Training Project Ltd	£106,330.70	£31,372.92	£269,110.47	£194,645.18	£601,459.27
Newbuildings Community and Environmental Association	£9,527.14	£7,000.00	£36,000.00	£0.00	£52,527.14
NIACRO	£57,241.34	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£57,241.34
NORIBIC - the Northern Ireland Business and Innovation Centre	£259,029.65	£150,609.54	£0.00	£0.00	£409,639.19
North West Chambers of Commerce Initiative	£48,810.44	£40,928.22	£0.00	£0.00	£89,738.66
North West Institute of Further and Higher Education	£439,887.45	£187,659.05	£0.00	£0.00	£627,546.50
North West Marketing Ltd	£28,365.14	£24,645.75	£0.00	29,975.86	£82,986.75
North West Play Resource Centre (T/A The Playhouse)	£79,031.81	£124,578.26	80,574.93	96,333.62	£380,518.62
North West Regional College	£0.00	£2,617.50	134,490.73	£0.00	£137,108.23
North West Rural Development Ltd	£124,494.21	£110,106.45	£95,142.19	£25,351.45	£355,094.29

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total (£)
North West Taxi Proprietors Ltd (NWTP)	£27,049.46	£23,451.65	£17,038.88	£0.00	£67,539.99
Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment	£62,437.46	£116,171.84	£68,023.36	£95,111.99	£341,744.65
Outer West Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership	£0.00	£0.00	11,968.00	£0.00	£11,968.00
Pennyburn Inclusive Play Trail	£28,320.24	£76,896.51	25,045.51	£0.00	£130,262.26
R.E.A.C.H Across	£10,304.53	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£10,304.53
Right to Hope	£91,184.80	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£91,184.80
Rosemount Resource Centre	£51,458.02	£42,722.70	£0.00	£0.00	£94,180.72
SEEDS	£0.00	£0.00	32,443.49	22,353.49	£54,796.98
Social Economy Agency	£0.00	£0.00	73,720.52	25,314.48	£99,035.00
St Columbs Park House Reconciliation Centre	£0.00	£9,118.78	33,198.94	26,778.94	£69,096.66
Strathfoyle Community Association Ltd	£40,850.87	£33,561.69	£0.00	£0.00	£74,412.56
Strathfoyle Women's Activity Group Ltd	£33,026.61	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£33,026.61
The Bogside Artists	£3,031.25	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,031.25
The Nerve Centre	£148,239.54	£95,007.59	£182,367.07	£79,824.12	£505,438.32
The Old Library Trust Healthy Living and Learning Centre	£21,023.94	£24,622.96	1,295.94	£0.00	£46,942.84
The Women's Centre	£50,014.93	£28,442.73	£0.00	£0.00	£78,457.66
Top of the Hill 2010	£0.00	£0.00	12,138.18	50,433.23	£62,571.41
Triax Neighbourhood Partnership Board	£0.00	£0.00	12,000.00	£153,182.50	£165,182.50
Trojans Youth & Community Development Group	£49,961.32	£26,646.06	£33,286.92	£40,064.34	£149,958.64
University of Ulster	£489,815.24	£442,857.04	£0.00	£0.00	£932,672.28
Verbal Arts Centre	£0.00	£0.00	7,267.43	51,153.10	£58,420.53
Void Arts Centre	£9,868.01	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£9,868.01
Waterside Area Partnership	£40,694.30	£24,966.33	£0.00	£0.00	£65,660.63
WAVE Trauma Centre	£8,813.11	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£8,813.11
Western Education and Library Board	£110,018.02	£115,584.81	£0.00	£0.00	£225,602.83
YES! Publications	£30,923.17	£6,607.95	£0.00	£0.00	£37,531.12
Local Strategy Partnership Derry City Council area *	£318,953.57	£214,113.18	£90,299.85	£44,261.05	£667,627.65
Total	£4,859,448.81	£2,810,999.53	£2,103,658.84	£2,051,406.84	£11,825,514.01

* - This expenditure relates to Technical Assistance, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication.

PEACE III Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Nil. DFP was only accountable for the Technical Assistance elements of PEACE III, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication.

INTERREG IIIA Programme (2000-2006; expenditure eligible until end June 2009)

Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
Derry City Council	£120,832.40	£47,098.63	£0.00	£0.00	£167,931.03
Lough's Agency	£54,196.68	£7,312.86	£0.00	£0.00	£61,509.54
NORIBIC	£0.00	£4,873.87	£64,022.51	£35,071.46	£103,967.84
North West Institute of Further & Higher Education (NWIFHE)	£62,732.16	£32,336.40	£12,962.63	£0.00	£108,031.19
North West Organic Co-op Soc Ltd	£0.00	£38,792.19	£56,791.13	£44,845.70	£140,429.02
North West Rural Development Ltd	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG) Ltd *	£115,710.30	£146,766.04	£137,301.86	£199,092.59	£598,870.79
Social Economy Agency *	£9,410.61	£26,170.77	£0.00	£0.00	£35,581.38
Total	£362,882.14	£303,350.77	£271,078.13	£279,009.75	£1,216,320.80

* This expenditure relates to Technical Assistance, which supports programme management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication.

INTERREG IVA Programme (2007-13; expenditure eligible until end December 2015)

Organisation	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
NWRCBG - North West Region Cross Border Group	£349,378.56	£331,052.17	£467,101.80	£4,818,233.96	£8,382,980.80	£14,348,747.29
Total	£349,378.56	£331,052.17	£467,101.80	£4,818,233.96	£8,382,980.80	£14,348,747.29

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he plans to extend the initial period of construction from 3 months to 12 months before Rates are payable on a dwelling that is under construction.

(AQW 55181/11-16)

Mr Storey: I have no plans to change the current arrangements.

The position mirrors that which exists in the rest of the UK under Council Tax. Completion notices are served on new houses that are at the stage where they are structurally wind and weather tight and are assessed as being capable of being occupied within a 3 month period.

However, after that period has elapsed, a further 12 months initial exemption is allowed in Northern Ireland if the property has never been occupied and remains empty. In the rest of the UK this additional grace period is only 3 months.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much of the INTERREG IVA Programme has been spent in South Down in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55193/11-16)

Mr Storey: In the financial years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, a total of £538,452.86 of INTERREG IVA funding was allocated to projects located in the South Down Constituency.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when the Northern Ireland Community Finance Fund will be open to applications.

(AQW 55216/11-16)

Mr Storey: I expect that the Community Finance Fund will be open to applications in Autumn 2016.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total amount of unpaid rates in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55246/11-16)

Mr Storey: The total amount of unpaid rates at the end of each of the last three years for which information is available is shown in the table below.

Rating Year	End of Year Debt relating to unpaid rates
2014/15	£156.6M
2013/14	£162.1M
2012/13	£168.3M

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has had any discussions with banks on the abolition of cheque charges levied against community and amateur sports clubs.

(AQW 55313/11-16)

Mr Storey: No, I have not discussed this issue with the local banks/building societies.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for a breakdown of Annual Managed Expenditure in each of the last 10 years, including pensions and the main individual benefits.

(AQW 55371/11-16)

Mr Storey: The table attached at Annex A shows AME expenditure by programme reported by departments in each of the years noted. Information prior to this is not readily available. This table also includes non-departmental AME such as Public Corporations Capital Expenditure and the centrally recorded Regional Rates and RRI Borrowing.

You should note that due to the introduction of Clear Line of Sight and the devolution of policing and justice in 2010-11 expenditure from that year onwards is not directly comparable to the preceding years. You should also note that this expenditure is as reported at that point in time and will not reflect any other classification changes that have occurred.

Expenditure on individual benefits should be requested from the Minister for Social Development.

Final Outturn 2008-09 to 2014-15

£m

AME Programme	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11*	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Benefits	4,425.4	4,782.7	4,945.7	5,116.4	5,372.4	5,383.5	5,557.1
Pensions	1,496.6	935.0	-1,759.1	2,009.3	1,814.8	1,847.8	2,375.9
Non Cash Costs	1,666.7	1915.3	52.0	489.1	668.4	301.0	383.0
Student Loans	144.5	193.4	105.6	114.7	102.0	162.8	206.3
NI Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme	-	-	-	-	0.5	1.7	7.9
Arm's Length Bodies Corporation Tax Payments	-	-	-	-	5.0	0.6	7.4
Total Departmental AME	7,733.1	7,826.6	3,344.2	7,729.4	7,963.0	7,697.3	8,537.6
Public Corporations Capital Expenditure	233.8	161.9	134.6	345.1	231.9	150.5	82.2
RRI Borrowing	260.0	246.0	236.9	375.0	150.9	195.9	258.4
Regional Rates	607.4	547.1	537.9	588.0	620.6	632.5	661.1
Total Non-Departmental AME	1,101.2	955.0	909.5	1,308.1	1,003.3	978.9	1,001.7
Total AME	8,834.3	8,781.6	4,253.6	9,037.5	8,966.4	8,676.3	9,539.3

* Expenditure in this year is lower due to the impact of the change in discount rate. Totals may not add due to rounding

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total civil service headcount in each of the last 10 years broken down by general service grade.

(AQW 55372/11-16)

Mr Storey: The information requested is shown in the attached tables.

Breakdown of NICS staff by Analogous Grade from 2006-2015

2006	Frequency	Percent
G5+	225	0.8
G6/7	1,251	4.6
DP	2,004	7.4
SO	2,897	10.6
EOI/EOII	7,662	28.1
AO	7,652	28.1
AA	3,317	12.2
Industrial	2,214	8.1
Total	27,222	100.0

2007	Frequency	Percent
G5+	218	0.9
G6/7	1,226	4.9
DP	1,888	7.5
SO	2,822	11.3
EOI/EOII	7,236	28.9
AO	7,253	29.0
AA	3,113	12.4
Industrial	1,280	5.1
Total	25,036	100.0

2008	Frequency	Percent
G5+	205	0.8
G6/7	1,248	5.1
DP	2,024	8.3
SO	2,770	11.3
EOI/EOII	7,375	30.1
AO	7,066	28.8
AA	2,615	10.7
Industrial	1,218	5.0
Total	24,521	100.0

2009	Frequency	Percent
G5+	208	0.8
G6/7	1,260	5.0
DP	2,147	8.5
SO	3,087	12.2
EOI/EOII	7,444	29.4
AO	7,484	29.6
AA	2,463	9.7
Industrial	1,184	4.7
Total	25,277	100.0

2010	Frequency	Percent
G5+	205	0.8
G6/7	1,290	5.2
DP	2,133	8.6
SO	3,072	12.4
EOI/EOII	7,395	30.0
AO	7,256	29.4
AA	2,213	9.0
Industrial	1,116	4.5
Total	24,680	100.0

2011	Frequency	Percent
G5+	242	0.9
G6/7	1,413	5.3
DP	2,353	8.8
SO	3,378	12.7
EOI/EOII	7,923	29.8
AO	8,019	30.2
AA	2,164	8.1
Industrial	1,101	4.1
Total	26,593	100.0

2012	Frequency	Percent
G5+	236	0.9
G6/7	1,391	5.0
DP	2,382	8.6
SO	3,288	11.9
EOI/EOII	7,828	11.9
AO	7,974	28.7
AA	2,063	7.4
Industrial	1,057	3.8
Prison Grades	1,520	5.5
Total	27,739	100.0

2013	Frequency	Percent
G5+	221	0.8
G6/7	1,449	5.2
DP	2,468	8.8
SO	3,324	11.9
EOI/EOII	7,977	28.6
AO	7,837	28.1
AA	2,076	7.4
Industrial	1,047	3.8

2013	Frequency	Percent
Prison Grades	1,507	5.4
Total	27,906	100.0

2014	Frequency	Percent
G5+	235	0.8
G6/7	1,524	5.4
DP	2,581	9.2
SO	3,467	12.3
EOI/EOII	7,952	28.3
AO	8,036	28.6
AA	1,776	6.3
Industrial	1,056	3.8
Prison Grades	1,475	5.2
Total	28,102	100.0

2015	Frequency	Percent
G5+	231	0.9
G6/7	1,470	5.5
DP	2,509	9.3
SO	3,385	12.6
EOI/EOII	7,652	28.4
AO	7,765	28.9
AA	1,508	5.6
Industrial	1,025	3.8
Prison Grades	1,361	5.1
Total	26,906	100.0

Notes:

Headcount data sourced from HRMS, HRConnect and other DOJ databases as at 1st April each year.

Figures for 2006-2010 include NICS staff in the 11 ministerial departments. Staff on career break are excluded.

Figures for 2011 onwards include NICS staff in the 13 Departments, staff in the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, the Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, staff of The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland/ The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints and the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Team. Staff on career break or on secondment to other organisations are excluded.

Includes permanent and temporary NICS staff.

Over the period 2006-2015 various changes in status affected the NICS headcount. In particular:-

In 2007 Water Service became NI Water resulting in a reduction in NICS staff of 1,700.

On 12th April 2010, due to the Devolution of Policing and Justice, DOJ and PPS staff were included in NICS staff numbers resulting in an increase of approximately 3,000 staff.

In 2012 the inclusion of Prison Grade staff in NICS personnel figures resulted in an increase of 1,700 staff.

In 2015 Planning Office staff became employees of the Local Councils resulting in a decrease of 430 staff. The same year Legal Services Agency became part of the NICS increasing NICS personnel figures by 130.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total public expenditure in Northern Ireland in each of the last 10 years, including current and capital expenditure; and Annual Managed Expenditure.

(AQW 55373/11-16)

Mr Storey: The table attached at Annex A summarises Final Outturn information reported by departments since 2008-09. Information prior to this is not readily available.

You should note that due to the impact of reclassifications, the Clear Line of Sight Project and the devolution of policing and justice in April 2010, information detailed is not directly comparable across all years.

Departmental Expenditure	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Non-Ringfenced Resource DEL	8,274.4	9,052.7	10,223.0	9,983.5	10,033.7	10,303.7	10,309.4
Ringfenced Resource DEL	318.5	458.7	279.4	420.5	576.9	450.9	503.2
Total Resource DEL	8,592.9	9,511.4	10,502.5	10,403.9	10,610.7	10,754.5	10,812.6
Capital DEL	1,488.6	1,458.5	1,393.0	1,389.4	1,119.8	1,126.8	1,330.0
Total DEL	10,081.5	10,969.9	11,895.4	11,793.3	11,730.5	11,881.3	12,142.6
Resource AME	7,581.5	7,626.9	3,146.9	7,516.3	7,769.6	7,468.7	8,260.5
Capital AME	151.6	199.7	197.3	213.1	193.4	228.7	277.1
Total Departmental AME	7,733.1	7,826.6	3,344.2	7,729.4	7,963.0	7,697.3	8,537.6

Departmental Final Outturn 2008-09 to 2014-15

Totals may not add due to rounding

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department has engaged, or will engage with UK Government plans to host an Anti-Corruption Summit in London in May.
(AQW 55374/11-16)

Mr Storey: My Department has received no communication regarding this event.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, given A Fresh Start recognized the need to examine the potential to devolve additional fiscal powers and increase the financial accountability of the Executive and that the UK Government remained willing to consider any proposals the Executive might bring forward for additional fiscal powers, to detail any proposals the Executive has raised with Westminster on this matter.
(AQW 55375/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Executive's top priority has been seeking agreement on the transfer, and use of Corporation Tax rate-setting powers. As Finance Minister, this has been my top priority in relation to the devolution of fiscal powers. In that regard the Executive's intentions are clear. It has committed to introduce the Northern Ireland Corporation Tax regime from April 2018, setting a rate of 12.5%.

My Department has also been considering the case for the devolution of other fiscal powers, where doing so would deliver a clear economic or social benefit for Northern Ireland. The impact further fiscal devolution would have on the Executive budget, and therefore the provision of public services, is a key factor here. Clearly what has been agreed in terms of Corporation Tax devolution as part of the recent Fresh Start Agreement has a direct bearing on this. The bringing forward of proposals in this regard will be a matter for the Executive to consider in due course.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of people employed in the public sector in each of the last 10 years, including both a headcount and on a full time equivalent basis.
(AQW 55407/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency collects information on the number of employee jobs in the public and private sector in the Quarterly Employment Survey, rather than persons in employment.

The table overleaf provides information on the number of employee jobs and full time equivalent jobs in the Northern Ireland (NI) public sector from 2005-2015.

Table: Northern Ireland public sector jobs, December 2005 - December 2015

Period	Number of public sector employee jobs	Number of public sector employee jobs on a full time equivalent basis
December 2005	221,290	178,710
December 2006	220,680	177,270
December 2007	220,000	176,980
December 2008	224,320	181,220
December 2009	225,230	181,450

Period	Number of public sector employee jobs	Number of public sector employee jobs on a full time equivalent basis
December 2010	219,540	176,610
December 2011	214,180	172,150
December 2012	214,610	172,150
December 2013	210,880	169,830
December 2014	210,480	169,360
December 2015	205,300	166,750

Notes:

- 1) Full time equivalent public sector jobs comprise public sector full time jobs plus a fraction of public sector part time jobs, based on ratios supplied by the Office for National Statistics.
- 2) The figures include a number of reclassifications between the public and private sector over the period.
- 3) Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Quarterly Employment Survey

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the current status of the public sector voluntary exit scheme, including uptake numbers and total borrowing to date.

(AQW 55409/11-16)

Mr Storey: The previous Finance Minister authorised allocations of £200m for 2015/16 from the Transformation Fund in accordance with the recommendations of the Public Sector Restructuring Steering Group (PSRSG). To date the Executive has undertaken borrowing of £183.5 million as a consequence of the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Schemes that have been allocated funding under the Transformation Fund are required to provide monthly profile returns. Based on the information provided in these returns for 2015-16, there are 3,132 (FTE) leavers at the end of February 2016. It is estimated that the VES schemes in the public sector will exit approximately 4,000 staff in 2015/16. More accurate information will be known once the various schemes close for 2015-16.

The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan confirmed the flexibility to use up to £200 million of borrowing in 2016-17 to fund voluntary exit schemes. Allocations of £117.6 million are being made to departments in Budget 2016-17 in respect of their proposed schemes. There will be further opportunity for departments to submit bids in respect of the Fund with allocations for the second tranche being made in June Monitoring.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the cost of office accommodation for the Northern Ireland Civil Service in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 55435/11-16)

Mr Storey: The table below sets out the cost to my Department for office accommodation since 2008-09. Under the Department's records management policy, financial information more than 7 years old is routinely disposed.

2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
83.2m	77.2m	69.5m	65.6m	68.7m	65.2m	65.7m

This response is provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only as the information for all departments is not held centrally.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the rates paid by propriety owned golf clubs in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 55441/11-16)

Mr Storey: The information requested is not available as Land & Property Services does not hold information which enables it to identify propriety owned golf clubs.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the uptake of Financial Transactions Capital by each Department, since the scheme began.

(AQW 55464/11-16)

Mr Storey: The following table outlines expenditure to end 2014-15 and the allocations made in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Financial Transactions Capital**£000s**

Department	Executive Allocations	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
DETI/DfE	Invest NI - Agri-Food Loan Scheme				1,400	2,000
DETI/DfE	Growth Loan Fund			6,800	2,000	5,000
DETI/DfE	Invest NI Projects				4,600	1,900
DETI/DfE	Northern Ireland Science Park			50	3,300	6,050
DfE	Poultry Litter					10,000
DHSSPS/DoH	GP Premises				9,000	10,000
DSD	Get Britain Building	11,839	7,200			
DSD/DfC	Affordable Home Loans		5,000	7,500		11,000
DSD	Empty Homes Scheme		3,700	5,500		
DEL	University of Ulster		25,000	48,475		
DEL/DfE	Queen's University				14,500	5,810
DSD	Co-Ownership Housing				94,498	
TEO	Office Accommodation					6,000
-	NI Investment Fund				-	55,793
Total Projects:		11,839	40,900	68,325	129,298	113,553

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the Barnett consequentials for Northern Ireland of the Chancellor's Budget Statement.

(AQW 55602/11-16)

Mr Storey: The following table sets out the NI Budget implications of the Chancellor's March Budget. Note that the NI Air Ambulance allocation is a non-Barnett allocation.

£million

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Resource DEL	5.8	64.9	69.3	70.2
Capital DEL	3.0	1.2	3.8	5.1
NI Air Ambulance	2.0	1.5	1.0	-

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the rates income received from charity shops in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 55606/11-16)

Mr Storey: The information requested is not available as Land and Property Services does not have a classification in its property database to indicate premises in the Valuation List that are occupied by charities.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has any plans to introduce a no smoking policy in the Stormont Estate.

(AQW 55624/11-16)

Mr Storey: The Department of Finance and Personnel has no current plans to introduce a no smoking policy in the grounds of the Stormont Estate.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (a) number of people in rates arrears; and (b) the value of those arrears in the Ards and North Down Council area.

(AQW 55644/11-16)

Mr Storey: As at 31st March 2015, there were 6,969 occupancies with a combined outstanding rating debt of £9,856,166 for properties within the Ards and North Down Council area. An occupancy represents a liable ratepayer at a property at a given time. The figures include occupancies with domestic or non-domestic debt.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 55337/11-16, to detail the profile of exits by grade (i) of the 300 exits required by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at the commencement of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (ii) for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for those who exited at the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 55646/11-16)

Mr Storey: The 300 exits indicated as an estimate by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) prior to the launch of the Scheme were not broken down by grade, although DARD identified within that estimate, the release of 40-50 exits would be required of Specialist Group 1 staff (EO2 equivalent).

The number of staff, broken down by grade, that accepted offers to exit DARD in the first 4 tranches of the Scheme, is shown on the Scheme website and can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-voluntary-exit-scheme>.

There were no offers made to staff from DARD in the fifth and final tranche of the Scheme.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will bring forward legislation on adoption before May 2016.

(AQW 48436/11-16)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): A draft Bill will be consulted on following executive approval.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the scale of each of the 2015/16 budgetary pressures faced by his Department.

(AQW 48513/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Whilst my Department is on course to deliver financial breakeven in 2015/16, the scale of budgetary pressures that has to be managed is considerable, comprising a range of areas such as pay, non-pay, demography pressures arising from the increasing demand from a growing and aging population, and the costs of improved treatments and technologies which can improve patient outcomes.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why letters sent to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust requesting earlier appointments for patients are treated as complaint letters.

(AQW 48616/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: This is an operational matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what action his Department is taking to improve the diagnosis rates of children with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD).

(AQW 48679/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a difficult condition to diagnose accurately because of the wide range of presenting symptoms – and these are symptoms which themselves can be indicative of other conditions, for example e.g. behavioural problems. There are also the difficulties associated with establishing a mother's alcohol intake before and during pregnancy.

It is important therefore that health professionals are aware of the signs and symptoms of the condition. Midwives deliver general antenatal public health, information and advice and this includes information on the prevention of FASD. In some cases midwives may be aware that the mother may have an alcohol problem and so will have identified them as being at risk of having a baby with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. If FASD is suspected when the baby is born, a midwife will refer to a neonatologist/paediatrician to diagnose and confirm. In addition, GPs and health professionals undertaking developmental assessments (health visitors, school nurses, Learning Disability teams) may identify developmental delay which can be caused by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

In order to raise awareness of FASD among Health professionals, the Doctoral Midwifery Research Society held a conference as part of their Health Pregnancy Seminar series on 'A Pregnant Pause on International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day'. It was hosted by the Doctoral Midwifery Research Society (DRMS) and the Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research (MFIR), home of EUROCAT Central Registry, within the Institute for Nursing and Health Research (IHNR) at University of Ulster.

In terms of Public Health resources, all pregnant women in NI receive the Pregnancy Book which is available online from the Public Health Agency, as is 'Birth to Five'. The Pregnancy Book has a section on alcohol and states that "the safest approach in pregnancy is to choose not to drink at all". The PHA also has an Alcohol and Pregnancy booklet for pregnant women available at: <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/alcohol-pregnancy-pocket-guide>.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 48688/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of children diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of all additional expenses incurred due to the delay in completing the trauma centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.
(AQW 48689/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is not yet possible to provide a breakdown of all additional expenses.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust's policy for preventing infections in patients that have midline catheters inserted.
(AQW 48700/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust guidelines/policies address the insertion and on-going care management of this type of venous access device. These focus on the steps to take to prevent avoidable infection and the measures required to keep the line patent (open). The Trust guidelines and policies cover the following:-

- training and competence of the operator;
- ensuring that the medication is compatible;
- the insertion of the cannula using aseptic principles;
- flushing the line following administration of the medication;
- disinfecting the entry site when manipulated;
- advice on types of dressings and dressing changes;
- monitoring for complications and what action to take;
- monitoring the site for signs of infection and what action to take if infection is suspected.

A "care bundle" checklist/form is completed indicating that this care has been undertaken.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the percentage of his budget spent on elective care; and how this compares to other UK jurisdictions.
(AQW 49298/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The HSC Trusts spent approximately 25% of their current expenditure budgets on elective care in 2013/14 (latest year for which data is available).

A like-with-like comparison with other UK jurisdictions is not available.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will introduce legislation on adoption.
(AQW 49299/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A draft Bill will be consulted on following executive approval.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional financial support is made available to enable General Practitioners to (i) set up; and (ii) maintain a practice in a rural area.
(AQW 49305/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The funding allocation formula for GP practices takes account of rurality in determining each practice's share of funding.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how the Time Out system operates in Emergency Departments; and (ii) whether it is operated in Emergency Departments in all Health and Social Care Trusts.
(AQW 49315/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: None of the Health and Social Care Trusts operates such a system. All patients who attend an emergency department are registered on presentation. While there will be occasions when those who register ask how long they may potentially wait to be seen and will be advised accordingly, it is not recognised practice that patients would be advised to leave and return to the emergency department at a later time.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department has taken to ensure changes to working contracts will not be imposed on junior doctors.
(AQW 49321/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I continue to believe that a negotiated settlement is the best way forward, and I reiterate my long held view that I have no desire to impose a contract on Junior Doctors in Northern Ireland.

I have asked my officials to continue to engage in discussions with local BMA representatives with a view to developing an agreed way forward for Northern Ireland. I trust that we can work on a replacement for a contract which has been recognised as not fit for purpose and find a solution that is tailored to Northern Ireland's needs, is not punitive to local taxpayers and, most importantly, ensures a safe service for patients.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to introduce the monitoring of patients that are seen by health professionals in relation to the abuse of psychoactive substances.

(AQW 49332/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Individuals who attend substance misuse services, or who seek support from health professionals either in primary or secondary care settings, are monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with their assessed clinical needs.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2 2011-2016 includes police interaction with people under the influence of psychoactive substances.

(AQW 49333/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Substance misuse is complex and multi-faceted. Effectively preventing and addressing this issue requires a co-ordinated approach, and the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2 (NSD Phase 2) ensures a shared responsibility and commitment across Government Departments, sectors, professions, communities and individuals.

One of the pillars of the NSD Phase 2 stresses the importance of addressing issues that fall within the domain of law and criminal justice. As well as efforts aimed at reducing the supply of illicit drugs, NSD Phase 2 supports criminal justice initiatives for reducing the level of harm associated with substance misuse. There is a range of associated outcomes contained in NSD Phase 2 that requires partnership working with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Department is also a member of the Organised Crime Taskforce Drug Subgroup.

In response to new trends and the emergence of New Psychoactive Substances, my Department led the development of the Drug and Alcohol Monitoring and Information System (DAMIS) to gather information and inform key stakeholders about potential trends. This system involves real-time surveillance of alcohol and drug, incorporating qualitative and quantitative information obtained from the Health & Social Care sector, the Criminal Justice Sector (including the PSNI), community-based organisations, the UK and RoI, and service user networks.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the work funded by the Public Health Agency allows researchers based at Queen's University Belfast to record information on people using psychoactive substances if it is not recorded by, or within, Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 49336/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In partnership with Start 360, the Public Health Agency has provided funding and support to the Institute of Child Care Research: School of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work in Queen's University Belfast to undertake a scoping exercise on the impact of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) on the work of professionals based in addiction services, Emergency Departments and residential care.

This study does not require them to 'record information on people using psychoactive substances' but instead it is focused on gaining a qualitative insight on NPS and seeking professionals views on how the use of NPS has impacted on their clients and their working relationships and practices with these clients. Field work is currently being undertaken and the final report should be available by the end of March 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether individual policies exist within each Health and Social Trust to facilitate direct payments for the care of (i) children; and (ii) adults.

(AQW 49347/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 makes direct payments available to:

- Disabled people to whom section 1(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons(NI) Act 1978 applies aged 16 or over;
- Those assessed as needing services under the Health and Personal Social Services (NI) Order 1972;
- Parents of disabled children;
- Disabled parents;
- Carers; and
- 16 and 17 year old carers assessed for services under the Children Order (NI) 1995.

My Department issued the following overarching guidance to Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and Trusts in order to assist the HSC in implementation and the administration of an effective direct payment scheme. This guidance applies to all of the aforementioned groups and can be accessed via the attached link: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/direct_payments_legislation_and_guidance_for_boards_and_trusts.pdf

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount of funding his Department has contributed to community and voluntary sector groups; and organisations that provide independent advocacy services, in each year since 2012.

(AQW 49359/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department provided annual funding of £4.7m towards the core administrative costs of voluntary and community organisations since 2012. Detail on funding to individual organisations is listed on the Government Funder's Database and can be accessed at www.volcomgrantsni.gov.uk

The core funded organisations which advertise advocacy services on the Family Support NI website are Include Youth, MENCAP, Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health, Threshold, Parenting NI, Rainbow and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

My Department has also funded organisations to attend advocacy training courses since 2012/13, as detailed in the table below.

	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)	2015/16 (£)
Alzheimer's Society	14,750	14,960	1,595	1,495
ARC NI	1,500	880		900
Age Concern			1,595	
British Deaf Association			2,090	
CAUSE			8,970	1,495
Disability Action	1,4750	14,960		2,990
Derg Valley Care				3,090
Faughanvale Community Project		420	420	
Mindwise			3,190	
NI Institute of the Disabled			1,508	
Positive Futures	1,650			
Prospects				395
Sense NI				1,545
VOYPIC				1,595
Total	£32,650	£31,220	£16,178	£13,505

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 47958/11-16, to detail when this question will be answered.

(AQW 49361/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I answered AQW 47958/11-16 on the 2 November 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what work has been undertaken to investigate how GP out-of-hours services could operate from the Banbridge Health Village.

(AQW 49552/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Out of hours services in the Southern area are provided by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust from bases in Craigavon, Newry, Dungannon, Armagh and Kilkeel. This configuration of bases is intended to ensure that the vast majority of residents in the Trust area have access to an out of hours base should a face to face appointment be required.

There are currently no plans to commission the provision of GP out of hours services from Banbridge Health Village. However, in developing a sustainable long-term model of out of hours service provision, the Health and Social Care Board will continue to assess the range and configuration of services required to best meet the needs of the population of the Southern area, including those living in the Banbridge locality.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what work has been undertaken to recruit additional GPs for the out-of-hours service at Craigavon.

(AQW 49553/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has put in place a number of measures to secure additional GPs to provide out of hours services across all its bases. Actions taken include the introduction of enhanced premia for difficult to fill shifts, additional funding to boost capacity at busy times, and flexible working arrangements for GPs providing out of hours

services. The Trust is also exploring options to recruit GPs from elsewhere in the EU and has recruited a number of triage nurses, nurse practitioners and pharmacists to work alongside GPs in delivering out of hours services.

My Department and the Health and Social Care Board have been working with providers to address the challenges facing GP out of hours services, and a number of actions have also been taken regionally to help meet these pressures. Up to £3.1m has been made available in 2015/16 to build capacity in GP out of hours services, including £700,000 to contribute towards indemnity costs for GPs working in out of hours, and a further £1.1m has been provided in-year to help providers meet increased demand for out of hours services over the winter months and the forthcoming Easter period.

The challenges facing GP out of hours services in the Southern Trust reflect the wider workforce pressures on GP services across Northern Ireland. In recognition of these pressures, I recently announced an investment of £1.2m per year to create an additional 20 GP training places. This is the largest investment in GP training for more than ten years and will increase the number of GP trainees to 85 per year from August 2016. In addition, the reviews of GP-led primary care services and GP out of hours services are nearing completion. I expect to receive a report of their findings within the coming days, and I will give careful consideration to the actions needed to ensure patients here continue to have timely access to high quality, sustainable GP services both in hours and out of hours.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will amend the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NI) to facilitate a ban on smoking in cars carrying people under 18 years of age.
(AQW 49556/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: An amendment to the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, in relation to smoking in cars, was agreed by the Assembly at Consideration Stage. As amended, the Bill allows my Department to make regulations prohibiting the use of tobacco or nicotine products in a vehicle when a person aged under 18 is present.

The Bill passed Final Stage in the Assembly on 15 March and will become an Act upon Royal Assent.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the Public Health Agency's recent awareness campaign for Breast Cancer, for an update on the solo public and GP campaign for ovarian cancer awareness.
(AQW 49563/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency (PHA) is currently taking forward a 'Be Cancer Aware' campaign to improve the public's awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer. As an initial element of the campaign work, in September 2014, the Agency launched an ovarian cancer awareness programme in which leaflets and posters were distributed across Northern Ireland to highlight the signs and symptoms of the illness. The programme was launched in partnership with Target Ovarian Cancer and Angels of Hope, a local charity.

The leaflets and posters were distributed to hairdressing salons, bingo halls, pharmacies and GP practices throughout Northern Ireland. They helped raise awareness of the signs and symptoms, in particular among women over the age of 50, and encouraged women to speak to their GP if they experience any of them.

The PHA also worked with the late Una Crudden to produce a video calling on women to read the leaflets and make themselves aware of the symptoms of ovarian cancer.

As part of the broader 'Be Cancer Aware' campaign, launched in February 2015, the PHA has developed a comprehensive new website at www.becancerawareni.info. The website provides information about signs and symptoms of a range of cancers, including ovarian cancer, explains what people can do if concerned, and signposts to recommended sources of support or further information.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether the Anticipated Performance Levels for each of the 42 Standards in the Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing for the year ending March 2015 were achieved; and (ii) to publish the Actual Performance Levels for each of the 42 Standards in the Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing for the year ending March 2015.
(AQW 49621/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Service Frameworks have a 3-year life cycle. The revised Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing was published in 2014. This framework includes 42 standards, which relate to a number of specific conditions, as well as communication and patient and public involvement, health improvement and protection, medicines management, palliative and end of life care and research. The generic standards which relate to all service frameworks are not reported on by the individual frameworks.

Each standard is supported by levels of performance to be achieved over 3 years and the revised Framework, as a living document, will continue to be subject to regular review and refinement in the light of new evidence. This will ensure that it provides a sound basis for continued improvement in the quality of health and social services.

At the end of this 3 year cycle, RQIA appraise the implementation of the Framework and report on its effectiveness. This appraisal informs a fundamental review, which not only evaluates the final achieved position against performance indicators and targets set, but also the effectiveness of the standards in the Framework and their continued utility and relevance.

There are no plans to publish performance levels at the end of Year 1.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many floors of the new tower block at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast are in use.

(AQW 49798/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Five floors of the new tower at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast are currently in use.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what actions the Health and Social Care trusts are taking to maximise the potential benefits of the TF3 Consortium telehealth services to patients with chronic conditions.

(AQW 49818/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 52851/11-16.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a progress report on the review into commissioning.

(AQW 49823/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The final report was published on the departmental website on 20 November 2015 at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/review-hsc-commissioning-arrangements-final-report>.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on concerns regarding changes to contracts for junior doctors; and whether he plans to address those concerns.

(AQW 49824/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of the strength of feeling amongst junior doctors in relation to proposals for the introduction of a new contract of employment for post-graduate doctors and dentists in training.

I have asked my officials to continue to engage in discussions with local BMA representatives with a view to developing an agreed way forward for Northern Ireland. I trust that we can work on a replacement for a contract which has been recognised as not fit for purpose and find a solution that is tailored to Northern Ireland's needs, is not punitive to local taxpayers and, most importantly, ensures a safe service for patients.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the current Lifeline contract will continue.

(AQW 49827/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The current Lifeline contract has been extended until 30 September 2016. The aim is to have a new contract in place by October 2016.

The Lifeline crisis response service will remain a key component of the Protect Life suicide prevention strategy. I am currently considering the PHA consultation report on the proposed future model of Lifeline, and options for the commissioning and delivery of that service.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he intends to introduce a consultation on the establishment of an air ambulance service.

(AQW 49829/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has completed the consultation on the key issues related to the establishment of a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for Northern Ireland and I announced the next steps to implement the Service including the allocation of £4.75m initial funding which includes £4.5m from the UK Banking Fines Fund provided by the Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department will implement changes to junior doctors contracts as proposed by the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt.

(AQW 49832/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I continue to believe that a negotiated settlement is the best way forward, and I reiterate my long held view that I have no desire to impose a contract on Junior Doctors in Northern Ireland.

I have asked my officials to continue to engage in discussions with local BMA representatives with a view to developing an agreed way forward for Northern Ireland. I trust that we can work on a replacement for a contract which has been recognised as not fit for purpose and find a solution that is tailored to Northern Ireland's needs, is not punitive to local taxpayers and, most importantly, ensures a safe service for patients.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when his Department will make a decision regarding the new junior doctors contract to be introduced in August 2016.

(AQW 49844/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I met with the Chair of the BMA (NI) Junior Doctors Committee in December 2015. I have also asked my officials to continue to engage in discussions with local BMA representatives with a view to developing an agreed way forward

for Northern Ireland. I trust that we can work on a replacement for a contract which has been recognised as not fit for purpose and find a solution that is tailored to Northern Ireland's needs, is not punitive to local taxpayers and, most importantly, ensures a safe service for patients.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to protect Lifeline.
(AQW 49848/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Lifeline crisis response service is commissioned by the Public Health Agency. The current Lifeline contract has been extended until 30 September 2016.

Lifeline provides essential support to people at a time when they are at their most vulnerable. It was established to provide immediate support and de-escalation for people in severe emotional crisis who are at risk of suicide. This focus will be maintained. I am currently considering the PHA consultation report on the proposed future model of Lifeline and options for the commissioning and delivery of that service.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people waiting for elective surgery in each (i) hospital; and (ii) Health and Social Care Trust broken down by procedure.

(AQW 50640/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people waiting for elective surgery in each hospital at 31st December 2015, the most recent date for which official statistics are available, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of people waiting for elective surgery, by hospital, at 31st December 2015

Hospital Site ¹	Total number of patients waiting at 31st December 2015
Altnagelvin Hospital	9,405
Antrim Hospital	3,572
Banbridge Hospital	67
Belfast City Hospital	8,289
Causeway Hospital	2,527
Craigavon Area Hospital	5,606
Daisy Hill Hospital	1,508
Downe Hospital	1,130
Knockbraken Health Care Park	*
Lagan Valley Hospital	1,855
Mater Hospital	2,946
Mid-Ulster Hospital	716
Musgrave Park Hospital	8,526
Newtownards Hospital	1,538
Royal Victoria Children's Hospital	1,520
Royal Victoria Hospital	8,543
School of Dentistry	135
South Tyrone Hospital	1,813
South West Acute	1,172
Tyrone County Hospital	928
Ulster Hospital	4,345
Waveney Hospital	13
Whiteabbey Hospital	843

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cells containing less than five have been masked to protect patient confidentiality

¹ At 31st December there were a total of 27 patients waiting who did not have a hospital site recorded.

Information on the number of people waiting for elective surgery in each Health and Social Care Trust broken down by speciality is published quarterly and available at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-inpatient-waiting-times-december-2015>

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 48357/11-16, whether he will answer the question that was asked in relation to each individual arm's-length body.

(AQW 50669/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Each health and social care trust is required to deliver its services in the most efficient and effective manner possible in order to help address the rising demand from a growing and aging population, as well as the costs of improved treatments and technologies which can improve patient outcomes. All other arm's length bodies within my Department must also provide their services effectively and efficiently in order to meet demand and live within their allocated budgets.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of never events have been recorded in each hospital in (a) each of the last 5 years; and (b) each of the last 12 months broken down by each programme of care.

(AQW 50743/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A Never Events list has not been adopted in Northern Ireland. As a consequence, no data on these events are routinely collected.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he has taken to implement the recommendations outlined in the Commissioner for Older People's 2014 report on Supporting Older Carers.

(AQW 50809/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Of the five recommendations made in the 2014 report, my department's analysis was that four recommendations were satisfied by the well established practice in the Health and Social Care (HSC) system. HSC Trusts have a statutory duty to make information regarding a carer's right to assessment widely available and to inform eligible individuals directly of that right.

Since 2013, a target in the Commissioning Plan Direction has required a 10% increase in the number of carers' assessments offered, as compared to the previous year. However, it would not be appropriate to set a target for "uptake" of assessment, as carers have a right to decline assessment. Indeed, the highest proportion of carers declining an assessment state that they do not require any further support.

Following the completion of a carers assessment, HSC Trusts are required to meet all eligible need identified, and mechanisms to carry out reviews and reassessments are already well established.

The report also recommended changes to the NISAT Carers Assessment form, echoing calls from other stakeholders and carer representatives. Accordingly, the tool has been reviewed and significantly changed as part of the review of eNISAT; changes include a change of name to the 'Carers Support Plan'.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will make and announce his decision on a Specialist Medicines Fund and the reintroduction of prescription charges.

(AQW 50884/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I would refer the Member to my Written Statement to the Assembly on 8 December 2015 on the Results of the Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request Process – Report and Actions.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of nurses working in a community setting now compared to 2010; and (ii) how he intends to increase this number of nurses working in a community setting in line with Transforming Your Care.

(AQW 50984/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) It is not possible to accurately identify all nursing staff working in a community setting from centrally held records. Furthermore, some staff may have roles which combine both settings.
- (ii) Community Nurses work across a range of nursing specialities in community settings for example District Nursing, Mental Health, Learning Disability, Children's Nursing as well as specialist nurses in areas such as Palliative Care, Diabetes, Respiratory, Tissue Viability and Continence. My Department's 'Delivering Care' policy initiative for safer nurse staffing in Northern Ireland, is currently developing a normative staffing tool for use within community services including district nursing, to ensure that there are sufficient district nursing teams with the right skills and expertise. This is being taken forward by the PHA and NIPEC.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department consulted on the decision to cease funding to the Family Fund for disabled children.

(AQW 51038/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: No consultation was carried out on my decision to cease funding the Family Fund for the remainder of the 2015/16 financial year. My decision was based on the exceptionally challenging financial climate facing my Department at that time.

However, following the outcome of the November Monitoring Round, I announced on 18 November that my Department had received investment of an additional £47.6m in Health and Social Care this year. I am therefore delighted that my Department is now able to provide further funding of £784k to the Family Fund to support the families of disabled children and young people with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 48315/11-16, to detail what plans his Department has in place to ensure that operating theatres in Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh can be utilised if an event or incident results in the temporary closure of the elective orthopaedic ward in Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQW 51063/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Any unexpected temporary closures of hospital inpatient wards would be addressed by the Western Health and Social Care Trust, through business continuity planning, at the time they occur. The Trust's business continuity plans would consider utilising all available capacity throughout hospital sites across the Trust, having regard to patient safety and the delivery of high quality care.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hip replacement operations that (i) were scheduled; and (ii) took place in (a) July 2015; (b) August 2015; and (c) September 2015, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 51104/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of hip replacement operations (i) scheduled and (ii) performed in July, August and September 2015, broken down by hospital site is shown in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Number of hip operations scheduled during the months of July, August and September 2015, by hospital site

Hospital Site	Number of hip operations scheduled during the months of July, August and September 2015, by hospital site		
	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15
Craigavon Area	24	24	24
Musgrave Park ¹	64	73	N/A
Altnagelvin	22	14	30
Royal Victoria Hospital Trauma Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A

1 Belfast Trust has advised that the number of scheduled operations in Musgrave for July and August are purely an estimate based on what they could treat. As Belfast Trust was not asked for an estimate during August 2015, a figure for September 2015 for Musgrave is not available.

2 The number of scheduled operations for the Royal Victoria Hospital Trauma Unit is not available.

Table 2: Number of hip operations performed during the months of July, August and September 2015, by hospital site

Hospital Site	Number of hip operations performed during the months of July, August and September 2015, by hospital site		
	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15
Craigavon Area	20	16	22
Musgrave Park ¹	69	84	95
Altnagelvin	22	14	27
Royal Victoria Hospital Trauma Unit			9

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a timeframe on the publication of a consultation regarding the establishment of an air ambulance service.

(AQW 51138/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following my announcement about the establishment of a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for Northern Ireland, my Department launched a public consultation on 23 November 2015 which will close on 22 January 2016.

I will announce my decision about the key issues related to this service after I have fully considered the responses to the consultation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has given any consideration to the introduction of a voluntary system whereby people that are willing to travel for hospital appointments can declare this so people without access to transport can avail of local services.
(AQW 51154/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The referral of patients for hospital appointments is determined by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. It would be expected that patients who are able to travel without assistance would do so, irrespective of the location of their appointment, and only those patients requiring HSC transport would avail of this as determined by their GP in liaison with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service which provides non-emergency transport.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number of nuisance calls received by the (a) Northern Ireland Ambulance Service; and (b) Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in each of the last three years; and (ii) cost of dealing with those calls.
(AQW 51177/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed that this question refers to the number of prank or hoax calls received by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS).

- a) Information on the number of potential prank or hoax calls received by the NIAS, including an estimated cost of these calls, is detailed in Table 1 overleaf, for each of the last three financial years.

Table 1: Number and Cost 1 of Potential Prank or Hoax Calls Received by the NIAS (2012/13 – 2014/15)

Year	Number of Prank or Hoax Calls Received	Number of Prank or Hoax Calls responded to	Estimated Cost per Prank or Hoax responded to	Total Estimated Cost of responding to Prank or Hoax Calls
2012/13	5,190	1,408	£150	£211,200
2013/14	4,784	1,528	£150	£229,200
2014/15	3,219	2,602	£150	£390,300

- 1 The NIAS also incurs costs in raising awareness and educating the community on the implications of hoax calls.
- b) The number of Hoax Calls received and responded to by NIFRS is detailed in Table 2 below. NIFRS do not routinely collect and collate the costs of responding to individual types of incidents, as the costs are variable.

Table 2: Number of Hoax Calls Received by NIFRS (2012/13 – 2014/15)

Year	Number of Hoax Calls Received	Number of Hoax Calls responded to
2012/13	1,957	524
2013/14	1,901	488
2014/15	1,614	442

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how (i) much his Department received from each monitoring round in each of the last eight years; and (ii) that money has been spent.
(AQW 51235/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details how much the Department received in monitoring rounds for the period 2008/09 to 2015/16 for current expenditure:

Year	Allocation £m	Description
2008/09	20	First call on available resources(1) and Learning Disability
2009/10	5	First call on available resources(1)
2010/11	30	First call on available resources(1) and prescription drugs
2011/12	20	Specialist Medicines; VR/VER schemes across HSC
2013/14	54.6	Elective Care; Pseudomonas; TYC; G8; Front line services (including looked after children and elderly population)

Year	Allocation £m	Description
2014/15	80	Unscheduled care/patient flow; Elective Care; NICE drugs and specialist services; TYC; safety and quality; Children's Services; Resettlements; Public Health Initiatives; other regional and Departmental priorities
2015/16	47.6	Elective Care, Unscheduled Care and other essential frontline services, psychological therapies

Note (1): Budget 2008-11 provided DHSSPS with the first call on available Executive resources up to £20m pa

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much has been spent on social care in each of the last four years.

(AQW 51236/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Gross expenditure before client contributions categorised by the Health and Social Care Trusts as Personal Social Services in the last four years was:

	£m
2010/11	999.4
2011/12	1,026.9
2012/13	1,046.4
2013/14	1,078.2

Source: Trust Financial Returns.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on what date the decision was taken that children under 14 years of age would be directed to the Royal Belfast Hospital For Sick Children rather than to the Mater Hospital.

(AQW 51262/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust decided on 13 November 2015 to temporarily redirect children arriving at the Mater Hospital's emergency department to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. It is within the competence of the Trust to take such decisions without consultation in light of the concerns expressed by senior medical staff about staffing levels in the emergency department. This decision amounted to the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied to ensure patient safety. The Mater Hospital is a vital part of the Belfast Trust's network of acute hospitals. Proposals for any future changes to services would be subject to consultation in line with my Department's guidance on change or withdrawal of services.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail who was consulted prior to the decision that children under 14 years of age would be directed to the Royal Belfast Hospital For Sick Children rather than the Mater Hospital.

(AQW 51263/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust decided on 13 November 2015 to temporarily redirect children arriving at the Mater Hospital's emergency department to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. It is within the competence of the Trust to take such decisions without consultation in light of the concerns expressed by senior medical staff about staffing levels in the emergency department. This decision amounted to the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied to ensure patient safety. The Mater Hospital is a vital part of the Belfast Trust's network of acute hospitals. Proposals for any future changes to services would be subject to consultation in line with my Department's guidance on change or withdrawal of services.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following the decision that children under 14 years of age would be directed to the Royal Belfast Hospital For Sick Children rather than to the Mater Hospital, to detail what future changes to services at the Mater Hospital are under consideration.

(AQW 51264/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust decided on 13 November 2015 to temporarily redirect children arriving at the Mater Hospital's emergency department to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. It is within the competence of the Trust to take such decisions without consultation in light of the concerns expressed by senior medical staff about staffing levels in the emergency department. This decision amounted to the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied to ensure patient safety. The Mater Hospital is a vital part of the Belfast Trust's network of acute hospitals. Proposals for any future changes to services would be subject to consultation in line with my Department's guidance on change or withdrawal of services.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children under the age of 14 were treated for each of the last 52 weeks at the Mater Hospital.

(AQW 51265/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: During the last 52 weeks (1st February 2015 – 31st January 2016), less than five children aged under 14, arrived by ambulance and were treated at the Mater emergency care department.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what specialist dental treatment services are available for children with special educational needs in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 51272/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Dental Service provides a wide range of services for children with special educational needs.

Community Dental Services (CDS) provide an oral screening and examination for children with special educational needs in a defined number of schools for children aged 4–18 years of age. This assessment allows dental staff to triage children for further dental treatment to either their own General Dental Practitioner, to the Community Dental Service clinics located within Community Treatment and Wellbeing Centres across Belfast or to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC) Dental Department.

The RBHSC provides care for all children up to the age of 13 years unless the child is under the care of a Consultant Paediatrician in the RBHSC (in which case care will be continued with the RBHSC Dental Department as required).

Children over the age of 13 years who are not under special paediatric care may have specialist dental treatment provided in the School of Dentistry, located on the Royal Hospital site, if appropriate.

Emergency dental care is available for all children within the CDS Treatment and Wellbeing Centres and the RBHSC 9am–5pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours, emergency dental care is provided by the Relief of Dental Pain Clinic in the Belfast City Hospital at evening and weekend clinics.

In addition, the BHSCT Health Promotion Team offers an Oral Health Promotion Evidence Based Caries Reduction Programme within schools in the 20% most deprived wards in the Belfast area.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much each Health and Social Care Trust has spent on external catering in each of the last five years.

(AQW 51291/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on external catering costs in each Health and Social Care Trust is not readily available because it is not collected centrally by the Trusts. It can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the provision of telephone services in the Emergency Department in the Mater Hospital; and (ii) to detail the number of times the IT system in the Emergency Department crashed resulting in the phone system failing.

(AQW 51329/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has two telephone systems throughout the Trust providing a continuous 24 hours telephony service. The switchboard services are provided from the Belfast City Hospital site.
- (ii) The primary IT system in the Emergency Department is independent of the telephone system and as such any outages would not result in the phone system failing.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients treated in Emergency Departments in each of the last five years, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 51330/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed that this question refers to the number of attendances (new, unplanned and planned reviews) at emergency care departments. It is important to note that the number of attendances does not equate to the number of patients treated, as it is possible for the same person to attend an emergency care department more than once during the year.

Information on the number of attendances at each emergency care department in Northern Ireland is published on an annual basis, and available to view or download from:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-and-ambulance-statistics>

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why the X-ray viewing system in the Mater Hospital can view X-rays from all other hospitals, with the exception of the Belfast City Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital.

(AQW 51331/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The reporting Radiologists based on the Mater Hospital site have the ability to remotely report Royal Victoria Hospital and Musgrave Park Hospital images and work is on-going to extend this functionality to include Belfast City Hospital images.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the £6m additional funding for unscheduled care and other essential frontline services received in the November monitoring round will be spent.

(AQW 51337/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) At 30 September 2015, the Belfast HSC Trust had 85 adult acute mental health beds, of which, eight were psychiatric intensive care beds. There were also 33 child acute mental health beds in the Belfast HSC Trust, of which, two were psychiatric intensive care beds.
- (ii) The most recent information available indicates that during 2014/15 there were 72 psychiatric admissions to hospitals outside the Belfast HSC Trust, involving Belfast HSC Trust residents, as a result of a lack of available capacity.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (a) admissions; and (b) discharges at the Dalriada Hospital in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 51382/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The numbers of admissions and discharges at the Dalriada Hospital in each month from March 2015 to February 2016 are detailed in the table below.

Month	Admissions	Discharges & Deaths
Mar-15	26	25
Apr-15	29	30
May-15	38	34
Jun-15	31	36
Jul-15	31	29
Aug-15	25	23
Sep-15	23	28
Oct-15	33	26
Nov-15	22	31
Dec-15	33	26
Jan-16	16	16
Feb-16	31	35

Source: Qlickview / PAS

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of times a patient was refused a bed in Dalriada Hospital in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 51384/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: On all occasions when medically accepted as an appropriate patient for Dalriada and a bed has also been available, patients have been accepted. They are never refused.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (a) how; and (b) where residents of the Four Seasons Health Care residential homes will be cared for; and what role the statutory sector will play.

(AQW 51415/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) My Department established a joint working group with the Health and Social Care Board, the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority to monitor developments and oversee the resettlement of the residents affected by the closures. Within Trusts multi-disciplinary teams were established to work through the details of all the moves, to identify new placements, and to manage the terms of the moves.
- (b) As at 15 March 2016 all residents in homes affected by Four Seasons Health Care closures have been placed in alternative care homes, apart from four residents remaining in Garvagh Care Home. Those four residents are awaiting places in other care homes of their choice.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the closure of the Emergency Department in Belfast City Hospital in November 2011, to detail why radiologists from Belfast City Hospital were not transferred to the radiology department in the Mater Hospital yet X-rays from the Mater Hospital are sent to a private company in England.

(AQW 51424/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In 2011 all consultant radiologists located at the Belfast City Hospital were retained to deliver the full radiology reporting capacity required by the hospital. All Health and Social Care Trusts contract the independent sector to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to report on imaging scans as quickly as possible where this cannot be fully met in-house.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Individual Funding Request process review, following his decision not to reintroduce prescription charges.

(AQW 51450/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I would refer the Member to my Written Statement dated 8 December 2015.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has plans to introduce fixed recoverable costs in medical negligence claims.

(AQW 51451/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has no plans to introduce fixed recoverable costs in medical negligence claims.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has given any consideration to appointing a Junior Health Minister with responsibility for mental health policy.

(AQW 51457/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland, the appointment of Ministers and Junior Ministers is a responsibility of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and not within the gift of individual departmental Ministers.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many beds are available for residential drug rehabilitation programmes; (ii) the waiting times for these services; and (iii) what plans are in place to further invest in residential drug rehabilitation provision.

(AQW 51460/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) There are currently 30 specialist detoxification and medically-managed rehabilitation beds operating within a Regional Addiction Treatment Network managed by the Health & Social Care Trusts, located in Downpatrick (12 beds), Antrim (10 beds) and Omagh (8 beds). These statutory inpatient facilities are complemented by additional rehabilitation services available from two independent sector providers, Northlands in Londonderry (12 beds) and Carlisle House in Belfast (8 beds).
- (ii) Waiting times for all of these services are variable and differ across service providers. It is therefore difficult to give a definite measure at any one point in time. However, in general the waiting times for these services are measured in days/weeks not months.
- (iii) There are no plans for any additional investment in inpatient addiction treatment service provision in Northern Ireland following the recent re-configuration of these services.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered transferring to the Scottish Medicines Consortium in terms of providing access to drugs and treatments.

(AQW 51465/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). This SLA allows the Department to endorse NICE Technology Appraisals and Clinical Guidelines for use in Northern Ireland as well as fully participating in the Interventional Procedures programme. NICE also produces guidelines in respect of Public Health and Social Care that DHSSPS is able to consider for endorsement here.

As part of the ongoing work to ensure the highest quality and safety of services for patients, my Department continues to monitor and consider alternative or additional models of approving medicines for use in Northern Ireland, including the Scottish Medicines Consortium.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether he intends to acquire any of the seven care homes currently run by Four Seasons Health Care; and (ii) what plans he has to re-home the residents of these care homes if they close.

(AQW 51526/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) I have no plans to acquire any of the seven homes owned by Four Seasons Health Care.
- (ii) The Department is working closely with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board, Health and Social Care Trusts, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and Four Seasons Health Care in developing plans to manage the transition to alternative care arrangements. The aim is to ensure that any relocation will be managed with minimal disruption to residents, and that they are able to remain as close to their original location as possible.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the increase in Bronchiolitis that has affected paediatric services at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, to detail (i) how many non-emergency appointments have been cancelled; and (ii) when the cancelled appointments will now take place.

(AQW 51543/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: No outpatient appointments have been cancelled. A total of 16 children had their elective surgery cancelled between Friday 27 November and Tuesday 1 December 2015. The Belfast Trust will reschedule these procedures as soon as possible as the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit remains under pressure with all beds occupied due to the increase in Bronchiolitis.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the basis of the calculation for the regional tariff of £593 payable to nursing care homes providers this year.

(AQW 51548/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As I indicated in my response to AQW 51416/11-16 and AQW 51417/11-16, the regional tariff rate is a matter for the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB); the Department has no role in establishing the rates paid for care.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients (i) transferred to the private sector; (ii) the treatments carried out; and (iii) the timeframe for treatment in each of the last three years.

(AQW 51558/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of patients transferred to the Independent sector and the treatments carried out is not readily available.

However, information on the number of patients who were transferred and seen within the Independent sector as either an inpatient or an outpatient is shown in Tables 1 & 2, for the last three years.

The HSC Board's approach over the last number of years has been to expand health service capacity through selective, targeted recurrent investment in elective specialties where there is an agreed gap between funded capacity and patient demand for assessment and/or treatment. In parallel with this approach, in order to maintain waiting times in elective care specialties where there is an agreed capacity gap, and pending implementation of recurrent solutions, the Board has provided non-recurrent funding to Trusts to undertake additional activity (both in-house and in the independent sector). Significant additional funding (£40m) has been provided as part of the 2015 November monitoring round to undertake significant additional outpatient or inpatient/daycase activity.

Table 1: Total number of patients receiving inpatient treatment commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector

	Total number of patients receiving inpatient treatment commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Total	27,278	26,910	16,363

Source: DHSSPS Hospital Statistics Inpatient Activity Publication

Table 2: Total number of patients receiving outpatient treatment commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector

	Total number of patients receiving outpatient treatment commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector					
	2012-2013		2013-2014		2014-2015	
	New	Review	New	Review	New	Review
Total	50,737	33,297	47,118	44,279	19,248	33,762

Source: DHSSPS Hospital Statistics Outpatient Activity Publication

Information detailing the timeframe for treatment within the Independent sector in each of the last three years is not readily available. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) have advised that all patients transferred for treatments to be carried out by an Independent Sector provider are monitored in accordance with the same stipulated waiting times standards for patients awaiting treatment within the HSC.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all revenue generated within his Department in 2014/15.
(AQW 51565/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: This information is publicly available within the Department's Resource Accounts for 2014/15.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with Four Seasons Health Care regarding their future plans for the provision of care.
(AQW 51584/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials in the Health and Social Care Board have been engaging in discussions with Four Seasons Health Care about the impact of the closures of the seven nursing homes.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 45982/11-15, for an update on the admission of permanent residents to statutory residential homes.
(AQW 51618/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the proposed closures of Statutory Residential Care Homes. The issue of reopening homes to permanent residents will be considered as part of that review.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department can take to alleviate the problems caused by the closure of Four Seasons nursing homes.
(AQW 51627/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is working closely with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board, Health and Social Care Trusts, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and Four Seasons Health Care in developing plans to manage the transition to alternative care arrangements. Our shared aim is to ensure that any relocation will be managed with minimal disruption to residents, and that they are able to remain as close to their original location as possible.

The Department has also established a joint working group with the Health and Social Care Board, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and the Trusts to monitor developments and to oversee the resettlement of the residents.

Within the Trusts, multi-disciplinary teams have been established to work through the detail of all the moves, to identify new placements and to manage the terms of all the moves.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which statutory care homes, that were earmarked for closure, will remain open as a result of his announcement on 24 November 2015.
(AQW 51639/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the proposed closures of statutory residential care homes. Please see the attached list of statutory residential care homes under review, which includes the Trust's proposals for each home. However, no final decisions have yet been made.

Statutory Residential Homes Under Review

Name of Home	Location	Trust Proposal
Southern Trust		
Cloughreagh House	Bessbrook	Retain
Crozier House	Banbridge	Retain
Skeagh House (temp closed)	Dromore	Closure
Roxborough	Moy	Closure
Slieve Roe	Kilkeel	Reopen until alternative options available
South Eastern Trust		
Northfield	Donaghadee	Closure
Belfast Trust		
Pine Lodge	Belfast	Closure

Name of Home	Location	Trust Proposal
Chestnut Grove	Belfast	Closure
Northern Trust		
Clonmore	Rathcoole	Retain
Joymount	Carrifkfergus	Retain
Lisgarel	Larne	Retain
Pinewood	Ballymena	Change of role
Roddens	Ballymoney	Closure
Rosedale	Antrim	Retain
Westlands	Cookstown	Closure
Western Trust		
Thackeray Place	Limavady	Retain
William Street	Cityside	Closure
Rectory Field	Waterside	Closure
Greenfeld	Strabane	Retain

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any plans to introduce Gamma Knife treatment.

(AQW 51642/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Gamma Knife is a registered trade mark of Elekta Inc. It refers to a radiotherapy machine capable of delivering stereotactic radio surgery (SRS) for the treatment of cranial tumours. Due to the relatively small patient population group requiring this treatment in Northern Ireland we do not currently provide this locally. Patients with small brain lesions or benign disease are currently being referred to centres in England for cranial stereotactic radiotherapy.

However, we have four Varian Truebeam linear accelerators in the Cancer Centre, Belfast City Hospital which use SRS to treat prostate, lung, head & neck, and gynae cancers.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the process for appointing someone who will have responsibility for the entire Mater Hospital site.

(AQW 51643/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust undertakes its own recruitment. The Trust currently has a senior management structure which provides appropriate coverage of all of its hospital and community sites.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation took place between the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and local schools in North Belfast to advise of the decision that the Mater Hospital has stopped treating children under the age of 14 years.

(AQW 51644/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The temporary suspension of the emergency department service for children at the Mater Hospital was introduced as a short term measure in light of concerns expressed by consultants at the hospital. This decision was taken in the interests of patient safety and was widely publicised at the time. It would not be usual for a Health and Social Care Trust to consult specifically with local schools in such circumstances.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Emergency Department doctors from the Royal Hospital have refused requests to work in the Mater Hospital; and what reasons were given by the doctors.

(AQW 51646/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Trust has been working with its ED Consultant workforce over the last number of months to ensure that their work plans include provision of service across two ED Units which make up the Emergency Care Service.

At present no consultants, who are predominantly employed on the RVH site, have refused to work on the Mater site.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that Daisy Hill Accident and Emergency services will not be compromised or reduced in the coming months.

(AQW 51650/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I refer you to my answer to AQW 50487/11-15.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 40973/11-15, for an update on the Cancer Focus NI campaign.

(AQW 51661/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I would refer the Member to my Written Statement dated 8 December 2015.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the current admissions policy for Slieve Roe Residential Home in Killeel.

(AQW 51742/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the proposed closures of statutory residential care homes. The issue of re opening homes to permanent admissions will be considered as part of that review.

Background Note

- 1 Mr Jim Wells MLA is a Democratic Unionist Party MLA for the South Down constituency.
- 2 The Southern Trust concluded its consultation on its statutory residential care home proposals on 18 September 2015. A report on the outcome of the consultation was considered by the Trust Board at its meeting on 22 October. The Trust Board recommendations included that Slieve Roe should progress to closure; however the Trust Board recognised that there are limited alternative options available in the Mourne area, and recommended that Slieve Roe should re-open to admissions until alternative options become available. The Trust Board recommendations have not been considered by the HSCB or the Department.
- 3 You informed the Assembly on 16 November of the Trust Board's recommendation that Slieve Roe should re-open to permanent admission until alternative options become available.
- 4 In light of the proposed closures recently announced by the Four Seasons Healthcare you asked the Health and Social Care Board on 26 November to "halt and review" the proposed closures of Statutory Residential Care Homes. You also asked that the review should take into account the current policy of not admitting permanent residents to those homes under review.
- 5 Officials are liaising with colleagues in the HSCB on the details of the review including the timescales and terms of reference.

Drafted by – Rosemary Kelly
Elderly and Community Care Unit
2 December 2015

Cleared by Head of Division – Chris Matthews XX December 2015

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Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether (i) all guidelines issued to clinicians and doctors dealing with cases of fatal foetal abnormality will be compliant with those guidelines issued elsewhere; and (ii) he will consider replacing the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 if those guidelines prove to be ineffective.

(AQW 51762/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) It is not clear to which guidelines the Member is referring. In any case, any guidance on termination of pregnancy published by my Department will aim to provide clarity on the law in Northern Ireland to health professionals working in Northern Ireland.
- (ii) Legislation relating to the criminal law on abortion in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Minister of Justice.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how his Department encourages adults that have learning disabilities to live independently through (i) appropriate accommodation; (ii) day care and day centre facilities; and (iii) other support services.

(AQW 51764/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland, people with a learning disability are supported to live as independently as possible. The services and support provided depend on individual circumstances and require an assessment of individual needs. Services

such as assessment and treatment, community living, respite or short breaks and day opportunities are provided by local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts.

(i) Appropriate Accommodation

People with a learning disability have a number of options on where they choose to live including with parents, families, in their own home (with support), supported living schemes or residential facilities. HSC Trusts continue to offer support to adults with a learning disability wherever they choose to live. Access to these services requires a referral from one of the HSC Trust's Learning Disability Multi-Disciplinary Teams who will assess the individual's needs.

(ii) Day Care and Day Centre Facilities

The HSC Trusts provide a range of day opportunities for adults with a learning disability. These include services delivered in Day Centres and through contracts with a range of voluntary and private sector providers. Activities include Accredited Courses, such as ASDAN, arts and crafts, community based activities, health and leisure and access to statutory Further Education or Training provision. These opportunities are offered to young people leaving school, people leaving hospital and those already living in the community.

(iii) Other Support Services

Some people with a Learning Disability may not need HSC assistance but for those who do, a range of services are available. The HSC Trusts assist adults with a learning disability to have control over their own lives and the support they receive, enabling them to live healthy and active lives, thereby maximising their potential. Services are provided in a range of community and residential settings by multi-disciplinary teams which include Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Learning Disability Nurses, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Physiotherapists. Healthcare support includes Directed Enhanced Services in primary care (involving regular health checks from general practices and advice/support from health facilitators). Short breaks (respite) are also important to provide short term breaks for both adults with a learning disability and their carers. A range of short breaks are available, provided either directly by the HSC Trust or through contracts with voluntary and private providers.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the process by which needs assessments are carried out for people with learning disabilities; and (ii) how this information is used to plan for their needs in the immediate and longer term.

(AQW 51766/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) A person with a Learning Disability can ask for an assessment of their health and social care needs, however the majority of those with a Learning Disability have been involved with the HSC from childhood and an assessment of their needs will have been carried out regularly and reviewed on an annual basis.

To allow young people with a Learning Disability prepare for adult life, a Transition process starts from the age of 14, led by the Department of Education with Health and Social Care input. Between the age of 18 and 21 the Transition from HSC Children Services to Adult Services is completed. At this stage a full multi-disciplinary assessment of needs of the individual and their carer/family is undertaken and agreed with them.

- (ii) Once the assessment of need is completed, a Care Plan and support package is agreed by the multi-professional staff, the person with a Learning Disability and their carer/family. This Care Plan will outline how the individual's required needs will be met in the immediate and longer term and will be reviewed annually by the individual's key worker and all the people and agencies involved in delivering the package of care.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Health, in light of his announcement to suspend the process proposed by the Health and Social Care Board for the closure of residential homes, to detail whether Northfield House in Donaghadee will be included in this decision.

(AQW 51797/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the proposed closures of statutory residential care homes. Northfield House will be included in the review.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the role and functions of the Learning Disability Service Framework since 2012.

(AQW 51813/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department has developed a suite of Service Frameworks which set out explicit standards for health and social care that are evidence based and measurable. Service Frameworks are an integral part of the Department's Quality 2020 strategy and the standards aim to ensure that services are safe, effective and person centred.

The Service Framework for the Learning Disability Service was launched in September 2012. Its aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a learning disability, their carers and families, by promoting social inclusion, reducing inequalities in health and social wellbeing and improving the quality of care. The Framework champions the principle that people with

a learning disability should access the same HSC services as other people, but recognises that there are occasions when special expertise or support is required.

The Department continues to monitor the Service Framework's progress and works closely with the project lead to ensure the standards are up to date and relevant.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 50343/11-16, to detail when he will provide an answer to this question.

(AQW 51829/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I answered AQW 50343/11-16 on the 2 February 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether he intends to make a decision regarding the future of funding through bursaries for nursing students; and (ii) to give a timescale for this decision.

(AQW 51862/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have no plans to change the financial support which my Department provides to undergraduate nursing students through bursaries.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, to detail what discussions he has had regarding the future of funding through bursaries for nursing students.

(AQW 51863/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have had no formal discussions regarding the future of funding, through bursaries, for nursing students.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has plans to increase the capacity at Musgrave Park Hospital for elective care treatments.

(AQW 51893/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is reviewing the potential for increasing capacity at Musgrave Park Hospital through the delivery of additional outpatient and inpatient sessions within the existing physical infrastructure.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when the last meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence took place; (ii) attendance at the meeting; and (iii) the whether any meetings are scheduled to take place in the future.

(AQW 51923/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG) last met on 14 November 2012.

This meeting was attended by the following Ministers:

- Minister Poots, Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (Chair);
- Minister Ford, Department of Justice; and
- Junior Minister McCann, Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Senior officials from the Department of Education, Department for Employment and Learning, Department of Finance and Personnel and Department for Social Development were also in attendance.

IMG approval will be required to progress the new 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' Strategy to the Executive. I am presently giving consideration to whether this requires a full IMG meeting.

The normal expectation would be that IMG meets a few months after RSG meets. In practice, given the level of representation, an IMG meeting will only be convened where there is sufficient business arising from the RSG meetings to justify Ministerial attendance and consideration. RSG has recently been focusing on the development of the new Strategy; this has not necessitated the convening a full IMG meeting. Where IMG members have required briefing, but a full meeting was not justified, briefing has been provided via correspondence.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in North Down are in receipt of direct payments as a result of caring for a person with a disability.

(AQW 51925/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on direct payments is not collected at constituency level, therefore figures have been provided for the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

In the South Eastern HSC Trust there were 19 one-off direct payments paid during September 2015 and 0 direct payments were in effect at 30 September 2015 for people who are caring for a person with a disability.

These figures include those carers who are caring for someone in the 'children with a disability', 'learning disability' and 'physical and sensory disability' client groups.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 50284/11-16, for a breakdown of these figures per (i) Health and Social Care Trust in relation to ambulance crews; and (b) district in relation to fire crews.

(AQW 51946/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The NI Ambulance Service does not record the HSC Trust area where an attack has occurred and the costs to do so would be disproportionate.
- (ii) The table below details the number of reported attacks on Firefighters while on duty in the year 2013, 2014 and 2015, broken down to reflect the District Structures.

District	Year		
	2013	2014	2015
Ballymena	5	4	5
Bangor	2	2	3
Belfast - North and West	62	44	45
Belfast - South and East	25	19	27
Coleraine	0	0	0
Cookstown	0	1	1
Downpatrick	1	2	6
Enniskillen	0	0	0
Glengormley	6	5	4
Lisburn	0	0	0
Londonderry	26	11	25
Newry	3	6	4
Omagh	0	0	0
Portadown	5	5	3

Note: 2015 figures relate to period January until end of November.

The table below details the number of reported attacks on Firefighters while on duty in the year 2013, 2014 and 2015, broken down to reflect the District Structures where the personnel were unable to continue their shift due to an injury.

District	Year		
	2013	2014	2015
Ballymena	0	0	0
Bangor	0	0	0
Belfast - North and West	1	1	2
Belfast - South and East	0	0	0
Coleraine	0	0	0
Cookstown	0	0	0
Downpatrick	0	1	0
Enniskillen	0	0	0
Glengormley	0	0	0
Lisburn	0	0	0
Londonderry	0	0	0
Newry	0	0	0
Omagh	0	0	0
Portadown	0	0	0

Note: 2015 figures relate to period January until end of November.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how much funding was allocated to Family Planning services in each of the past five years; and (ii) how much is projected for this financial year.

(AQW 51951/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Details of expenditure for Family Planning Services provided by Health and Social Care Trusts in each of the last five years is set out in the table below. Projected spend for 2015/16 is £2.4m.

2014/15 £m	2013/14 £m	2012/13 £m	2011/12 £m	2010/11 £m
2.35	2.32	1.71	1.79	1.82

* Source: HSC Trusts

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was spent by the Health and Social Care Board on interpreters in each of the last three years.

(AQW 51983/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Interpreting services in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland are provided by the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS). Total Expenditure on interpreters, in each of the last three financial years, is set out in the table below.

2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £
3,069,182	2,906,967	2,777,572

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the trauma centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

(AQW 52002/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Critical Care building was handed over to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in April 2015 which was followed by the opening of the Emergency Department in August 2015. It is anticipated that the remaining services in the new building will be operational from summer 2016.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provisions for appropriate care have been made for residents of Ballynahinch care home, given it has been earmarked for closure.

(AQW 52026/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Oakridge nursing home in Ballynahinch is no longer closing as it has since been sold to another independent care home provider.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to provide further clarity on the recently announced guidelines in cases of fatal foetal abnormality; and (ii) what steps he has taken to relay further information to clinicians and health care professionals impacted by the lack of clarity in the guidelines.

(AQW 52031/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) I recently submitted draft termination of pregnancy guidance to the Executive for approval to publish. As drafted, the guidance fully reflects existing law in Northern Ireland. Under the law as it stands, fatal fetal abnormality is not in itself a ground for termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland.
- (ii) With Executive approval, I intend to issue the guidance to health care professionals to provide them with clarity on what is permitted under existing law in Northern Ireland. The guidance will be revised to reflect any future changes to the law.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Families Matter Strategy will be reviewed.

(AQW 52037/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is intended to undertake a review of the Families Matter Strategy in 2016.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional resources are being sought to reduce waiting times for appointments for elective care.

(AQW 52065/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Improving waiting times continues to be one of my key priorities and the vast majority of the additional resources made available by the Executive are going directly towards tackling waiting times.

The further allocation of £30 million I recently announced follows the Executive's earlier allocation of £40 million. The combined £70 million will ensure in the region of 150,000 extra assessments, tests and procedures are delivered. Also many children awaiting assessment for autism will benefit from the £2 million I recently allocated for this specific area.

Most people will be seen during January to March of this year so the full extent will not be clear until early 2016/17 however we are now seeing real reductions in the number of people waiting for assessment or treatment.

Provisional figures for February 2016 show that those waiting more than 18 weeks for a first outpatient appointment have fallen by 9% and those waiting longer than 26 weeks for an inpatient day case has fallen by nearly 13%. It is clear that the investments we are directing towards waiting lists are making a difference. But it will take time and significant non recurrent and recurrent investment to bring waiting lists back to an acceptable level while simultaneously increasing capacity to meet demand. My commitment to an additional £30 million is an important step to ensuring continued progress.

For the longer term, the Health and Social Care Board has developed a plan to arrest the decline in elective waiting times and deliver sustainable improvements, which my officials are currently considering.

I have also appointed an expert panel to lead the debate on the optimal configuration of Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland. This will be a clinically led process to advise us what services the people of Northern Ireland should expect from their Health and Social Care system.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether response times to life risk calls will increase if the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service removes wholtime cover at weekends in Carrickfergus.
(AQW 52078/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholtime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. To facilitate this NIFRS propose changes to crewing models at 11 fire stations (including Carrickfergus). A public consultation on the proposals was launched on 14 December 2015 and closed on 7 March 2016. NIFRS is currently considering consultation responses.

The safety of both the Public and firefighters remains a priority.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on future plans for the provision of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in Upper Bann.
(AQW 52091/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholtime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. To facilitate this NIFRS propose changes to crewing models at 11 fire stations (including Portadown in the Upper Bann constituency). A public consultation on the proposals was launched on 14 December 2015 and closed on 7 March 2016. NIFRS is currently considering the consultation responses.

The continued safety of both the Public and firefighters remain the priority.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the potential shortage strategy of general and mental health nurses; and (ii) to detail his strategy for the recruitment of nursing staff.
(AQW 52093/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: During the same timeframe the number of mental health nurses employed by Health and Social Care has increased slightly by 11 whole time equivalents.

Demand continues to increase and my Department is currently considering the number of undergraduate nurse training places it should commission from the local universities in 2016/17.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many vacant beds are available in residential and nursing care homes in comparison to the 254 patients that are scheduled to be displaced by the proposed closure of Four Seasons care homes.
(AQW 52101/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At 30 September 2015, there were 143 declared vacancies in statutory residential homes and 584 declared vacancies in independent residential and nursing care homes registered as caring for frail elderly and people with dementia.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the terms of references of his Department's review of residential and nursing care.
(AQW 52102/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following the decision made by Four Seasons Health Care to close seven nursing homes, I asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the current process examining the future role and function of statutory residential care homes as a precautionary measure

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the changes that will be implemented as a result of the proposed downgrading of a number of Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service stations; and (ii) the criteria for downgrading selected stations.

(AQW 52146/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) identified in its most recent risk assessment that its existing wholetime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across Northern Ireland to address the level of risk. To facilitate this NIFRS propose changes to crewing models at 11 fire stations. A public consultation on the proposals was launched on 14 December 2015 and closed on 7 March 2016. NIFRS is currently considering consultation responses.

The continued safety of both the Public and firefighters remains a priority.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service regarding (i) future budgetary cuts; and (ii) the subsequent downgrading of Fire Service stations.

(AQW 52147/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The financial planning process within my department for 2016/17 is ongoing and decisions have not yet been taken on the budget position for the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. I have met with the Chair and Interim Chief Fire Officer and separately with FBU representatives.

I will not preside over unsafe services and the safety of both the public and firefighter remain a priority.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) headcount; and (ii) number of whole time equivalent employees in the Health and Social Care Board on the 1 November 2015.

(AQW 52162/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Staffing figures at 1 November are not available. On 15 December 2015, I launched a public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system, which includes my proposals to de-layer the existing system by moving away from the current commissioning model and closing down the Health and Social Care Board.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the attendance times of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in each of the last 24 months; and how this compares to targets.

(AQW 52163/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) Response target is to achieve and maintain the local 999 emergency response standard of 75% appliances attending an incident within the set target times. The table below shows the NIFRS Emergency Response Standards. The NIFRS Emergency Response standards are currently under review.

	1st Appliance	2nd Appliance
High Risk Areas	6 mins	9 mins
Medium Risk Areas	12 mins	15 mins
Low Risk Areas	21 mins	24 mins

The information for each of the last 24 months is set out below:

2014

Month	% meeting the response standard (target 75%)	
	1st App	2nd App
Jan-14	71.97%	67.52%
Feb-14	63.07%	68.75%
Mar-14	66.84%	67.88%
Apr-14	69.68%	68.39%
May-14	65.61%	61.78%
Jun-14	69.66%	61.80%
Jul-14	66.67%	60.92%
Aug-14	62.11%	73.29%
Sep-14	66.47%	60.59%

Month	% meeting the response standard (target 75%)	
	1st App	2nd App
Oct-14	70.48%	68.67%
Nov-14	71.26%	67.82%
Dec-14	59.55%	61.24%

2015

Month	% meeting the response standard (target 75%)	
	1st App	2nd App
Jan-15	67.61%	68.18%
Feb-15	66.89%	66.89%
Mar-15	67.27%	64.85%
Apr-15	68.31%	68.85%
May-15	65.03%	67.83%
Jun-15	70.91%	62.42%
Jul-15	72.14%	66.67%
Aug-15	74.49%	63.78%
Sep-15	67.93%	64.67%
Oct-15	59.62%	62.44%
Nov-15	65.66%	61.62%

Background Note

- Samuel Gardiner MLA has requested details of NIFRS performance against its emergency response standards (ERS) over the last two years. NIFRS have provided the requested information.
- The table below shows the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service's (NIFRS) current Emergency Response Standards.

	1st Appliance	2nd Appliance
High Risk Areas	6 mins	9 mins
Medium Risk Areas	12 mins	15 mins
Low Risk Areas	21 mins	24 mins

- In April of this year NIFRS launched a public consultation on its proposals to revise its Emergency Response Standards to reflect current risk data and information (SUB 222/2015 refers).
- Responses from consultees and recommendations from a Peer Review report have prompted NIFRS to revisit the ERS proposal. Further consultation will be required and NIFRS do not expect implementation of New Response Standards before August 2016.

Drafted by John Millar 15/12/2015

Cleared by Head of Division – Julie Thompson & DATE

Copy distribution List:

Gareth Bannon
Linda Devlin
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Public Safety Unit

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of recorded assaults on (i) doctors; (ii) nurses; (iii) carers; (iv) members of the Fire and Rescue Service; (v) members of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service; and (vi) all other health workers broken down by hospital where applicable, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 52165/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information is not readily available in the format requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Details of verbal and physical assaults on HSC staff are recorded by each Trust on a six monthly basis ending in March and September of each calendar year. The table below details the total number of recorded assaults for each HSC Trust in each of the last three years ending 30 September 2015.

The Table also includes the total number of attacks on NI Fire and Rescue Service staff in each of the last three years ending 31 December 2015.

	Year Ending 30/9/2013	Year Ending 30/9/2014	Year Ending 30/9/2015
Belfast HSC Trust	2893	2974	3427
South Eastern HSC Trust	628	922	873
Northern HSC Trust	1322	1401	1283
Southern HSC Trust	1661	1085	1180
Western HSC Trust	1248	1342	1052
N.I. Ambulance Trust	340	356	250
	Year Ending 31/12/2013	Year Ending 31/12/2014	Year Ending *31/12/2015
Fire and Rescue Service	135	99	123

* (Includes figures up to the end of November 2015 – December figures not yet available)

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the proportion of Assembly Written Questions tabled to his Department that were answered on time in each month since January 2015.

(AQW 52166/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information is not available in the format requested.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of live birth Down syndrome children born in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52209/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The latest available information on the number of registered births with a diagnosis of Down syndrome is available publicly at the following link;

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Core%20Tables%202013.pdf>

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many times each Out of Hours service has closed in each of the last five years; and (ii) why they closed in each instance.

(AQW 52237/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Out of Hours services report that there have been no closures in their services during the past 5 years.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting times for each Out of Hours service in relation to both (a) patients that attended the service; and (b) patients that were visited by a doctor, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52238/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Out of Hours services are provided in each Health and Social Care Trust and offer urgent primary medical care when a patient's GP surgery is closed.

Out of Hours Services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust are provided by Western Urgent Care. The Western Health and Social Care Trust average waiting times for Out of Hours Services, for base and home visits, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Western Health and Social Care Trust Out of Hours average waiting times 2010-2015

Year	Base Average Waiting Time Minutes	Home Visit Average Waiting Time Minutes
2010	57	77
2011	73	87
2012	83	92
2013	71	91
2014	92	109

Year	Base Average Waiting Time Minutes	Home Visit Average Waiting Time Minutes
2015*	98	110

Source: Western Urgent Care

* up to and including 30th November 2015

The average waiting times for out of hours services (base and home visits) in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust are shown in Table 2 below. The system used to retrieve this information was upgraded in October 2013 and therefore the information is only available from this date.

Table 2 Southern Health and Social Care Trust Out of Hours average waiting times, October 2013-November 2015

Year	Base Average Waiting Time Minutes	Home Visit Average Waiting Time Minutes
Oct-Dec 2013	141	128
Jan-Dec 2014	159	139
Jan-Nov 2015	176	130

Source: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Due to differences in procedures, average waiting times for Out of Hours services in the other Trusts cannot be provided. However, key performance indicator compliance data is available and is shown in Tables 3-5 below.

Table 3 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Out of Hours average visiting times completed within set performance indicator time

Base visit	2013	2014	2015*
Routine calls completed within 6 hours	99.5%	99.5%	99.3%
Urgent calls completed within 2 hours	93.1%	94.6%	94.8%
Emergency calls completed within 1 hour	68.9%	71.6%	86.9%
Home visit	2013	2014	2015*
Routine calls completed within 6 hours	99.6%	99.5%	99.2%
Urgent calls completed within 2 hours	90.5%	89.3%	85.9%
Emergency calls completed within 1 hour	61.2%	62.7%	73.7%

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

* up to and including 30th November 2015

Due to a change in the patient information system used in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, accessible data is only available for the last 2 years, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Out of Hours average visiting times completed within set performance indicator time

Face-to-face Consultation	2014-15	YTD 2015
% urgent calls given face-to-face consultation within 1 hr of triage	84%	87%
% less urgent calls given face-to-face consultation within 2 hrs of triage	90%	91%
% routine calls given face-to-face consultation within 6 hrs of triage if needed	98%	98%

Source: South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

YTD year to date

Out of Hours Services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust are provided by Dalriada Urgent Care, which operates an appointment system. The figures in Table 5 overleaf are performance indicators based on quality standards for 2012-2014.

Table 5 Dalriada Urgent Care Out of Hours average visiting times completed within set performance indicator time

Performance Indicator	2012-2014
Base visit	
Routine calls completed within 6 hours	99.4%
Urgent calls completed within 2 hours	93.7%
Emergency calls completed within 1 hour	89.3%
Home visit	
Routine calls completed within 6 hours	99.7%
Urgent calls completed within 2 hours	90.8%
Emergency calls completed within 1 hour	87.4%

Source: Dalriada Urgent Care

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the average length of time patients had to wait in an ambulance after arriving at an Emergency Department, broken down by Hospital, in each of the last 5 years; and (ii) how this compares to the ambulance turn-around targets.

(AQW 52239/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- i The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) have advised that the average length of time patients wait in an ambulance after arriving at emergency care departments is not collected.
- ii There is no turnaround time target for ambulances at Northern Ireland emergency care departments.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Carers (Scotland) Bill progressing through the Scottish Parliament; and whether he intends to legislate on the issue of extending rights to adult and young carers.

(AQW 52314/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Colleagues in the Scottish Government continue to work on the passage of the Carers (Scotland) Bill and have successfully completed Stage 2 on 1st December 2015. I await the outcome of their deliberations and will monitor the impact of the completed legislation with interest.

Corresponding legislation covering the rights of carers in Northern Ireland to be assessed for support to assist them in their caring role is found in the Carers and Direct Payments Act (NI) 2002. The Act places a duty on Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to make information on a carer's right to an assessment readily available. A component of the regional Northern Ireland Single Assessment Tool is used to record the carer's needs for support, as well as their preferences and wishes with regard to how those needs should be met. HSC Trusts are required to meet all eligible need that is identified.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail each occasion that an official from his Department or its arm's-length bodies have claimed expenses for hotel accommodation in each of the last three years, including the (i) name of the hotel; (ii) date of the stay; (iii) the cost of the stay per night; (iv) the reason of the stay; and (v) grade or job title of the official.

(AQW 52321/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the average waiting time following referral to a mental health specialist; and (ii) on average how long a patient must wait on being assessed, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52324/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Figures are not available by average waiting time and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Table 1 below details waiting times at 31 October 2015 to access adult mental health services (i) overall and (ii) broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0-3	>3-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-18	>18-26	>26-39	>39-52	>52	
Belfast	487	344	140	83	31	26	6	3	0	1,120
Northern	489	349	116	0	0	0	0	0	0	954
South Eastern	306	186	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	533
Southern	280	371	244	42	10	0	0	0	0	947
Western	344	240	70	16	0	0	0	0	0	670
Northern Ireland	1,906	1,490	611	141	41	26	6	3	0	4,224

Source: HSCB

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for children's mental health assessments (i) in each of the last four years; and (ii) on 1 November 2015 broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52325/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Figures are not available by average waiting time and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- (ii) Table 1 below details the waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services at 31 October 2015. These are the latest figures available.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Waiting Time (weeks)									Total
	0-3	>3-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-18	>18-26	>26-39	>39-52	>52	
Belfast	145	78	35	5	1	0	0	0	0	264
Northern	50	30	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	86
South Eastern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southern	46	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	56
Western	115	80	44	28	21	0	0	0	0	288
Northern Ireland	356	197	86	33	22	0	0	0	0	694

Source: HSCB

Figures relate to CAMHS Step 3 services.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of nurses that graduated; and of those, how many are registered and employed locally, in each year since 2010.

(AQW 52338/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of nurses who have graduated in Northern Ireland since 2010 is detailed below.

Year	QUB graduation	UU graduation	OU graduation	Total
2010	400	193	18	611
2011	429	204	56	689
2012	370	204	24	598
2013	473	216	31	720
2014	405	218	10	633
2015	381	220	16	617

Nurses wishing to practice must register with the NMC, an independent professional body. My Department does not hold details of this register, nor is any information available in relation to the employment status of QUB and UU graduates.

A condition of being able to undertake an Open University nursing degree is that applicants must be already be employed within the HSC. These students generally continue in employment locally and so the information for those students is set out below.

Year	OU graduates employed locally
2010	18
2011	56
2012	24
2013	31
2014	10
2015	14 (2 graduates have not yet obtained suitable posts)

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of local children that were admitted to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit in Dublin in (i) September 2015; (ii) October 2015; and (iii) November 2015. (AQW 52340/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of children from Northern Ireland that were admitted to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit in Dublin in (i) September 2015; (ii) October 2015; and (iii) November 2015 is detailed below by month.

Month	Number of children admitted
September 2015	0
October 2015	0
November 2015	<5

Source: HSC Board

Notes

1. In order to protect patient confidentiality, cell sizes less than 5 have been masked.
2. The figures given in the table exclude patients from Northern Ireland who are admitted to PICU in Dublin as part of the Service Level Agreement in place for paediatric cardiac services.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what functions and responsibilities currently carried out by the Public Health Agency will be removed as part of the restructuring; and of these, to detail how long the Public Health Agency had control of each function or responsibility. (AQW 52342/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: On 4 November I outlined wide-ranging, ambitious and radical plans for transforming our health and social care system. The proposed changes seek to radically reduce bureaucracy and break down barriers to innovation. I stated that I want the PHA to renew its focus on early intervention and prevention, working more closely alongside my Department. I believe the best way to maintain a strong focus on them is to maintain an expert Public Health Agency.

My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. No decisions have yet been taken about the location of functions in the future structure.

My Department will take account of the views of all relevant stakeholders and will be working closely with all HSC colleagues, including those in the HSCB, Trusts and Public Health Agency, in the coming months to define the best health and social care structures for Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health and Social Care Trust employees earning £100,000 per annum received a pay rise in the last three years, broken down by (a) year; (b) Health and Social Care Trust; and (c) the employee's salary and the rise received. (AQW 52347/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) I refer the member to my response to AQW 48168/11-15 which details the number of medical and non-medical staff that had a total annual remuneration in excess of £100,000 in each of the last three years. These employees, as with all other Health and Social Care employees received pay awards over the last three years in line with the following pay circulars:

2012/13	Senior Executive Pay Award 2012/13 Hospital, Medical and Dental Staff 2012/13 Pay Award Agenda for Change Pay Award 2012/13
2013/14	Senior Executive Pay Award 2013/14 Hospital, Medical and Dental Staff 2013/14 Pay Award Agenda for Change Pay Award 2013/14
2014/15	Senior Executive Pay Award 2014/15 Hospital, Medical and Dental Staff 2014/15 Pay Award Agenda for Change Pay Award 2014/15

- (b) As above.
- (c) The information broken down by 'employee salary and rise received' is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to increase the range of treatments provided by pharmacists that are available under the Minor Ailments Scheme.
(AQW 52355/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At this time, the Minor Ailments Scheme is the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). As part of a wider review of all pharmacy services being conducted by the HSCB, consideration is being given to the Minor Ailments Scheme. Any decision about future expansion would be informed by the outcome of that review.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to improve the way in which Diabetes is (i) self-managed; and (ii) prevented.
(AQW 52375/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is estimated that 80% of Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by promoting healthy eating, physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. Tackling obesity amongst the population (of which approximately 60% are either overweight or obese) remains an important part of our approach to reducing the numbers of new cases of Type 2 diabetes in the future.

In June 2014, my Department published a Public Health Strategic Framework – 'Making Life Better' (MLB). This provides the overall framework for public health for the next 10 years and will bring together actions across government to improve public health by addressing the determinants of ill-health and health inequalities. Underpinning MLB, the Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022: A Fitter Future for All (2012) aims to address the issue of overweight and obesity through a co-ordinated, integrated and cross-sectoral approach. A recent three year review of the Framework has indicated that over 75% of the actions identified are on course for completion by the set target dates.

On 8 March 2016, I launched for public consultation a draft Diabetes Strategic Framework. The overall aim of the Strategic Framework is to realise a vision of care which improves outcomes for people living with diabetes, or at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Empowering people to self manage through structured diabetes education and primary and secondary prevention are key themes of the Strategic Framework. The Diabetes Strategic Framework includes an implementation plan with actions to support each of the Framework's key themes.

At the same time, I also announced an investment package of £1.7million to support diabetes services, £1million of which is part of the recently announced £30 million health and social care Transformation Fund, set up to support projects and initiatives which are focused on innovation, prevention and collaboration.

A copy of the Diabetes Strategic Framework consultation document can be accessed at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/consultations>. The consultation period will end on 31 May 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will ensure that each Health and Social Care Trust will provide access to a (i) diabetes education course; and (ii) range of options to learn about diabetes on an on-going basis, for each person with diabetes.
(AQW 52376/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am committed to ensuring that services are in place to improve the health and well-being of people living with long term conditions, including diabetes.

My Department's Policy Framework 'Living with Long Term Conditions' (2012) recognises the important role that structured patient education programmes play in supporting people to self manage their condition. A Regional Long Term Conditions Implementation Group, led by the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board and including representation from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Long Term Conditions Alliance NI, is in place to implement the good practice outlined in the Policy Framework. The Regional Implementation Group has developed an implementation plan which includes actions to improve access to structured patient education programmes.

A review of diabetes services, led by the Chief Medical Officer was initiated in 2012. The review report was published in June 2014. One of the review report's 11 recommendations was to widen access to patient education and self management

programmes. My Department is currently working with key stakeholders to consider how the recommendations of the review report can be taken forward.

Alongside this, a Programme for Government (PfG) commitment has been in place to enrol people who have a long term (chronic) condition, and who want to be enrolled, in a dedicated condition management programme. Significant progress has been made in achieving this commitment. The most recent summary report for structured patient education programmes (both condition specific and generic) delivered in 2013/14 was published in March 2015 and showed a year on year increase in both the number of programmes delivered and the number of programme participants in 2013/14 compared with 2012/13 and the PfG baseline monitoring year 2011/12.

Between 2011/12 and 2013/14, the number of structured patient education programmes delivered increased by 34.5% from 625 to 841. Participant numbers over the same period increased by 25% from 10,189 to 12,741. A total of 318 structured patient education programmes covering both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes were delivered in 2013/14, with 2,738 participants.

A series of workshops has taken place to explore themes and outcomes for a framework for the next Programme for Government 2016-21. Further workshops are planned and my Department will continue to be fully engaged in this process.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a commitment to enrol everyone that has a long-term condition in a self-management programme is a priority for his Department during ongoing discussions for the 2016-2020 Programme for Government.

(AQW 52377/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am committed to ensuring that services are in place to improve the health and well-being of people living with long term conditions, including diabetes.

My Department's Policy Framework 'Living with Long Term Conditions' (2012) recognises the important role that structured patient education programmes play in supporting people to self manage their condition. A Regional Long Term Conditions Implementation Group, led by the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board and including representation from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Long Term Conditions Alliance NI, is in place to implement the good practice outlined in the Policy Framework. The Regional Implementation Group has developed an implementation plan which includes actions to improve access to structured patient education programmes.

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A series of workshops has taken place to explore themes and outcomes for a framework for the next Programme for Government 2016-21. Further workshops are planned and my Department will continue to be fully engaged in this process.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how his Department has met the current Programme for Government commitment to enrol everyone that has a long-term condition in a self-management programme.

(AQW 52378/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am committed to ensuring that services are in place to improve the health and well-being of people living with long term conditions, including diabetes.

My Department's Policy Framework 'Living with Long Term Conditions' (2012) recognises the important role that structured patient education programmes play in supporting people to self manage their condition. A Regional Long Term Conditions Implementation Group, led by the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board and including representation from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Long Term Conditions Alliance NI, is in place to implement the good practice outlined in the Policy Framework. The Regional Implementation Group has developed an implementation plan which includes actions to improve access to structured patient education programmes.

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A series of workshops has taken place to explore themes and outcomes for a framework for the next Programme for Government 2016-21. Further workshops are planned and my Department will continue to be fully engaged in this process.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what recruitment is planned in 2016 for full and part-time firefighters.

(AQW 52380/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Future recruitment plans for NIFRS will be informed by the professional assessment of risk and the appropriate deployment of resources. The safety of both the public and firefighters continues to be a priority.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will meet representatives from both the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades Union to facilitate additional recruitment.

(AQW 52381/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have recently met with the Chair and Interim Chief Fire Officer of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) and separately with FBU officials. Future recruitment plans for NIFRS will be informed by the 2016/17 financial planning processes which are currently ongoing and by the professional assessment of risk and the appropriate deployment of resources. The safety of both the public and firefighters continues to be a priority.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service are fully equipped to deal with incidents of terrorist bombing.

(AQW 52382/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have bespoke Standard Operation Procedures and tailored command and control arrangements, which include specialised Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability to ensure they can deal with incidents of terrorist bombing.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the development of the paediatric centre at Daisy Hill Hospital; and for an indication of the anticipated completion date.

(AQW 52397/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Detailed design work is now complete. Subject to confirmation of funding, the main construction work is expected to start in March 2016 and be completed in September 2017.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of vacant consultant posts broken down by (i) Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) speciality.

(AQW 52410/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Latest centrally available figures (at 31st March 2015) for consultant vacancies actively being recruited to are provided in the tables below. These vacancies occur as part of normal turnover of staff due to retirement, transfers, resignation or can be newly created posts.

(i)

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time equivalent
Belfast	55	54.7
Northern	11	11.0
South Eastern	4	3.9
Southern	13	13.0
Western	29	29.0

(ii)

Consultant Specialty	Headcount	Whole-time equivalent
Acute Medicine	1	1.0
Anaesthetics	8	8.0
Cardiac Surgery	1	1.0
Cardiology	7	7.0
Care of Elderly	6	6.0
Dermatology	1	1.0
Emergency Medicine	7	7.0
ENT	1	1.0
Gastro-Intestinal	1	1.0
General Medicine	2	2.0
General Medicine w/SI Care of Elderly/Stroke	1	1.0
General Medicine w/SI Respiratory	1	1.0
General Surgery	2	2.0
Haematology	2	2.0
Histopathology	1	1.0
Learning Disability	2	2.0
Medical Oncology	3	3.0
Neurology	7	7.0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	4	4.0
Old Age Psychiatry	4	3.9
Oncology	3	3.0
Ophthalmic Surgery	1	1.0
Orthogeriatrics	1	1.0
Paediatric Medicine	7	7.0
Paediatric Surgery	2	1.7
Palliative Medicine	3	3.0
Psychiatry	8	8.0
Radiology	16	16.0
Rheumatology	1	1.0
Surgery w/Special Interest Breast	1	1.0
Trauma & Orthopaedics	7	7.0

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of consultants that are being paid but not working due to ill health or suspension pending investigation.

(AQW 52412/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently 35 consultants being paid whilst on sick leave or suspension out of around 1,700 in HSC Trusts. This may relate to very short term or long term absence.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how much has been paid annually in bonuses to administrators; and (ii) the criteria used to allocate bonuses, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years.

(AQW 52416/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is the only Trust operating a bonus scheme.

This Scheme does not apply to administrators and applies only to the catering staff employed at Knockbracken Foods.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the referral waiting time for gastroenterology in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52425/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on outpatient waiting times, broken down by HSC Trust and specialty is published on a quarterly basis in the Northern Ireland Waiting Times Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times publication. The latest data can be found at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-diagnostic-and-inpatient-waiting>

Please note that gastroenterology services may also be carried out within the General Medicine specialty, however it is not possible to specifically identify this activity.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients that receive the drug Crizotinib broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52426/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: One patient in the Western Health and Social Care Trust is receiving Crizotinib. No patients in the Belfast, Northern, Southern or South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts are currently receiving Crizotinib.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to increase the availability of financial assistance for community groups that support the needs of older people and that operate within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust catchment area.

(AQW 52427/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has been engaged in a co-design process with representatives from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, to develop proposals for a new Innovation Scheme. This will be open to all voluntary, community and social enterprise groups. I intend to consult on the proposals for this Scheme shortly.

However my Department currently provides funding, through core funding arrangements, to five organisations on a regional basis to support the needs of older people.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given departmental reorganisation and the reduction in the number of Departments, for his assessment of the impact this will have on the future administration of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

(AQW 52441/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service will remain with my Department. The restructuring of the NICS Departments will have no impact on the future administration of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients that attended an Emergency Department between the 18 December 2015 and 3 January 2016 due to alcohol related illnesses, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 52449/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of patients attending emergency care departments due to alcohol related illnesses is not available.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of waiting times at the (i) Causeway Hospital, Coleraine; and (ii) Antrim Area Hospital between 18 December 2015 and 3 January 2016.

(AQW 52451/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on waiting times at (i) the Causeway emergency care department and (ii) Antrim Area emergency care department between 18th December 2015 and 3rd January 2016 are detailed in the table below.

Department	Percentage of Attendances Waiting Under 4 Hours	Number of Attendances Waiting over 12 hours	Total Number of New & Unplanned Review Attendances ¹
Antrim Area	62.5%	50	3,497
Causeway	60.1%	3	1,843

1 Information excludes planned review attendances.

Source: Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the consideration he has given to reducing or removing the cost of parking at hospitals; and (ii) what steps are being taken to improve parking facilities for both staff, patients and visitors to hospitals or other medical facilities.

(AQW 52452/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All income generated from car parking fees is used to meet the costs of providing and maintaining car parking facilities, including the cost of security, equipment and grounds maintenance. Any small surplus that arises is re-invested into patient care. If car parking charges were not incurred then £3.6m per annum would have to be re-directed from front-line patient care towards the costs of providing and maintaining car parking facilities.

Recent improvements in car parking include an expansion of 300 spaces at the Ulster hospital site as a result of conversion of the site of the former Tor Bank special school site, provision of 37 additional spaces adjacent to the mortuary on the Royal Hospital site by CPS the private sector provider engaged by the BHSC and development of a proposal for a new 8 storey multi-storey car park on the Royal Hospital site to meet the needs of the new Children's Hospital when opened.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much was spent on Extra Contractual Referrals for people with eating disorders to obtain treatment in other parts of the UK, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52454/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The regional expenditure on Extra Contractual Referrals (ECRs) for people with eating disorders to obtain treatment in the last 5 years is tabled below. This includes ECRs to England, Scotland and Republic of Ireland.

Year	Cost
2010/11	£2.8M
2011/12	£1.5M
2012/13	£1.3M
2013/14	£1.2M
2014/15	£1.8M

Due to the small numbers of patients referred outside of Northern Ireland for treatment for an eating disorder, a breakdown by Trust area is not provided, as this may have the potential to breach patient confidentiality.

Further to my announcement on 7 October 2015, work is underway to consider the feasibility of a specialist eating disorder unit in Northern Ireland, and initial findings are expected by March 2016.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimation of the number of people with Familial Hypercholesterolemia, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52483/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently just over 1,000 patients in N. Ireland with genetically-confirmed Familial Hypercholesterolaemia. It is not possible to break this number down by Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many people with Familial Hypercholesterolemia have been identified, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52484/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently just over 1,000 patients in N. Ireland with genetically-confirmed Familial Hypercholesterolaemia. It is not possible to break this number down by Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of full time equivalent nurses employed to carry out the testing service for Familial Hypercholesterolemia, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52486/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The answer is provided in the table below.

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time Equivalent
Belfast	1	1.0
Northern	1	0.5
South Eastern	1	0.5
Southern	1	0.5

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time Equivalent
Western	1	0.5

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the provision for treating mental health patients and patients with challenging behaviour.

(AQW 52501/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There is a wide range of provision for treating mental health patients and patients with challenging behaviour. These include:

- Primary Care Talking Therapies Teams – accessed through GP
- Community Mental Health Services – this involves care provided by one or more professionals such as social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists etc
- Acute Mental Health Services – these services provide support at a time of crisis and can provide intensive home support and/or admission to hospital
- Specific services - these usually involve receiving care from a specialist team such as Alcohol/Drug Addiction, Eating Disorders, or Personality Disorders.

The Belfast Trust also provides regional mental health facilities such as the Medium Secure Unit (Shannon Clinic) and the Child and Adolescent inpatient service (Beechcroft).

While our mental health services have come a long way in the last decade, we have much more to do. I am committed to further reform and innovation. That will require funding. Some of that can be found by reprioritising existing resources, but new money will also be needed.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has appointed an independent professional to analyse responses to the Public Health Agency's Lifeline consultation.

(AQW 52512/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have not appointed an independent professional to analyse responses to the Lifeline consultation.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the outcome of the consultation on the future of the Lifeline Service has been postponed.

(AQW 52514/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency's report on the Lifeline consultation was submitted to my Department on 21 January. I am considering the report and the associated recommendations for the new Lifeline service. A decision on the new service will be announced shortly.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of cases dealt with by each minor injuries unit, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52527/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed that this question refers to the number of attendances (new, unplanned and planned reviews) at Type 3 emergency care departments. It is important to note that the number of attendances does not equate to the number of patients treated, as it is possible for the same person to attend an emergency care department more than once during the year.

Information on the number of attendances at each emergency care department in Northern Ireland is published on an annual basis, and available to view or download from:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-and-ambulance-statistics>

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total number of hours of domiciliary care currently being provided by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 52532/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of hours of domiciliary care currently being provided is not available. However, the estimated number of domiciliary care contact hours provided during a survey week in 2014 is available and can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Estimated number of domiciliary care contact hours provided during a survey week in 2014, by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

HSC Trust	Hours Provided
Belfast	41,341

HSC Trust	Hours Provided
Northern	51,778
South Eastern	62,190
Southern	50,426
Western	45,063
Northern Ireland	250,798

Source: Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland (2014) <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/dcs-adults-ni-14.pdf>

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when the last statistical analysis of depression rates was conducted; (ii) what steps his Department has taken to address these rates; and (iii) the work conducted by his Department to learn from best practice in other jurisdictions of the United Kingdom and abroad.

(AQW 52570/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Mental health diagnostic data is not routinely collected in Northern Ireland at present. The Health and Social Care Board is in the process of developing a new mental health managed-care data system which will routinely gather diagnostic data, and should be in a position to provide this type of information from 2017/18 onwards.
- (ii) The Health and Social Care Board is currently establishing Primary Care Talking Therapy Hubs across all Trust areas to improve access to talking therapies and lifestyle support for people who have common mental health needs, for example, anxiety, depression, stress, etc. It is anticipated that when fully developed over the next three years, these Hubs will provide care for an additional 20,000 people per year.
- (iii) The regional Mental Health Care Pathway, "You in Mind", was published in October 2014. It draws on the best available evidence and provides guidance for the implementation of evidence-based therapies in response to specific mental health needs. In addition the Health and Social Care Board has, over the last three years, provided additional funding to enable staff to train in a wide range of NICE-approved psychological therapies with the aim of enhancing the range of psychological therapies available across mental health services, including the treatment of depression. To date over 300 staff have benefited from this training.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number of patients waiting on care packages to be put in place; and (ii) how long each patient has been waiting in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 52571/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information is not available in the format requested.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether it is within his Department's remit to legislate on the amount of paracetamol tablets or powder sachets that can be sold during one transaction.

(AQW 52573/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Control of the sale of paracetamol products is covered by provisions made under the UK-wide Medicines Act 1968, and the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, to which the Minister for Health and Social Services and Public Safety is a joint signatory with the Secretary of State.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department plans to review further the domiciliary care sector following the recent adult social care review.

(AQW 52575/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials are currently working with colleagues in the HSC Board to determine action required following the HSC Board's review "A Managed Change: An Agenda for Creating a Sustainable Basis for Domiciliary Care in Northern Ireland". I recognise the significant challenges facing the social care sector, and in particular the Domiciliary Care market, and will continue to monitor carefully the current situation.

In addition, my Department is taking forward a three stage process to reform adult care and support, which will set the future long term strategic direction for adult social care services including domiciliary care. It will also look at how services are funded, with the aim of ensuring the adult care and support system of the future is fit for purpose, efficient and sustainable for years to come. The

outcomes from the HSCB review will inform the development of policy proposals under the Reform agenda.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why referrals to the Autism Assessment Service in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area are taking up to 20 months for an appointment; and what measures he is taking to address this delay.

(AQW 52581/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast HSC Trust has observed an estimated 30% increase in the number of referrals to the children's ASD diagnostic service and a 73% increase in adult referrals within the last four years. To address this current delay, the Trust has provided an additional 57 diagnostic appointments between January and March 2016. The Trust is also engaging with current Community and Voluntary Sector contracts to provide additional sessions with a focus on early intervention. It is hoped that some of these new early intervention initiatives will be available towards the end of June 2016.

You will also be aware of my recent announcement of an additional £2m investment in children's autism services which will fund expanded teams to improve assessment times, and also expand Autism-specific support services.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) why consultation events on an air ambulance service took place in Fermanagh, Armagh and Londonderry but not in Omagh, County Tyrone; and (ii) whether the UK standard operating procedure for air ambulances applies locally.

(AQW 52607/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Four public consultation meetings regarding the establishment of a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) were held in Ballymena, Belfast, Londonderry and Fermanagh. The choice of location in Irvinestown, County Fermanagh, was intended to facilitate access for the main population centres in that region due to its location between Omagh and Enniskillen.

One of the consultation questions asks whether the Northern Ireland HEMS, when established, should join the Association of Air Ambulances (AAA). This would entail signing up to the AAA Framework, which provides members with guidance on governance, the legal and regulatory environment, clinical standards, operational management, standard operating procedures, dispatch of aircraft, staffing and training. I will make a decision on this and the other key HEMS issues in the weeks ahead.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on increasing the minimum standards of care in care homes as outlined in the Changing Culture of Care report of November 2014.

(AQW 52646/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Revised care standards for nursing homes were published on 13 April 2015.

New standards are included to cover: daily life; individual and Human Rights; the use of restraint and/or restrictive practice; responding to residents' behaviour; dementia; and intermediate and step-up or step-down care.

My officials have begun the process of updating the standards for residential care homes in line with the changes made to standards for nursing homes.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Fire Stations closed between 14 May 2007 and 4 May 2011.

(AQW 52662/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There were no Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Fire Stations closed between 14 May 2007 and 4 May 2011

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 48467/11-16, to detail (i) the steps being taken to recruit the eight non-paramedic ambulance staff and three paramedic staff vacancies in West Tyrone; (ii) how the vacancies are being covered; and (iii) the number of non-paramedic ambulance staff and paramedic ambulance staff vacancies across Northern Ireland.

(AQW 52720/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The NI Ambulance Service (NIAS) regularly monitors its manpower plans and has initiated a recruitment process to fill funded vacancies and has developed a training programme to support that recruitment. This will enable NIAS to endeavour to fill the eight non-paramedic ambulance staff and three paramedic staff vacancies in West Tyrone stations.
- (ii) NIAS is currently covering the planned production hours associated with the vacancies in West Tyrone stations through a mixture of relief staff being rostered to these shifts and/or offer of overtime to current suitable staff.
- (iii) The number of non-paramedic ambulance staff and paramedic ambulance staff and vacancies across Northern Ireland are provided below

Paramedic and non-paramedic ambulance staff* as at 30th September 2015

	Grade	Whole-time equivalent
Paramedic staff	Paramedics (Permanent & Temporary)	337.14
	Rapid Response Vehicle Paramedics (Permanent, No Temporary)	82.14
	Paramedic Station Supervisors (Permanent)	20.00
Non-Paramedic staff	Emergency Medical Technicians (Permanent & Temporary)	180.92
	Trainee Emergency Medical Technicians (Permanent & Temporary)	43.00
	Emergency Medical Technician Station Supervisors (Permanent)	4.00

* For the purpose of this response non-paramedic ambulance staff has been defined as non-paramedic A&E frontline posts.

All Vacancies which the Trust were actively recruiting to, as at 30th September 2015

Grade	Headcount	WTE
Patient Care Services	43	42.59
Emergency Medical Technician	120	119.36
Rapid Response Vehicle Paramedic	4	3.86
NEAC Call Taker	1	0.53
Control Officer - EAS	1	1.00
Clinical Support Officer	1	1.00
NEAC Admin Officer	1	1.00
Administrative Assistant	1	1.00
Total	172	170.34

Note that the Emergency Medical Technician vacancies above are posts created as part of an internal training and recruitment exercise, rather than unoccupied existing posts.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the provision of bursaries for student nurses compares with other parts of the UK.

(AQW 52754/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the provision of bursaries to student nurses across the four countries of the United Kingdom is set out in the Table below:

	Northern Ireland	England	Wales	Scotland
Non Means-tested bursary (per annum)	£5,165	N/A	N/A	£6,578
Means-tested bursary (per annum)	N/A	A maximum of £4,806 (£5,947 in London) dependent on living arrangements	A maximum of £4,491 dependent on living arrangements	N/A

In addition to the basic bursary awards set out above student nurses across the United Kingdom may also be entitled to additional allowances depending on their individual circumstances. In England and Wales, student nurses also receive £1,000 a year in a non-means tested maintenance grant.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the availability of out-of-hours GP services in the West Tyrone, broken down by town, in each of the last twelve months; and (ii) whether the Western Health and Social Care Trust is assessing how the reduction of these services is leading to more people from rural areas travelling to acute hospitals for treatment.

(AQW 52764/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) For the purposes of this answer, 'West Tyrone' has been defined as the Strabane and Omagh areas. Normally, the Strabane out-of-hours base has 1 GP on duty. Whenever the situation arises where a GP isn't available in the

local base, arrangements are put in place for a GP from a neighbouring base (i.e. Altnagelvin or Omagh) to travel to Strabane and carry out base consultations, as well as home visits in the local area. Patients are given an appointment time as part of a block booking session for the particular shift. Omagh's out-of-hours base is normally staffed by 2 GPs. In the case of a vacant shift, the arrangements are similar to Strabane and the GP from Enniskillen will see the Omagh patients if no other GP is available in the local base.

- (ii) The Western Health and Social Care Trust is not responsible for the provision of GP out-of-hour services. Western Urgent Care, which has been commissioned by the Health & Social Care Board (HSCB) to provide these services, meets with HSCB staff on a regular basis to report on their performance in the delivery of this service. As part of these governance and performance meetings, Western Urgent Care report on their performance against the quality standards set out in the NI Specification for GP out-of-hours.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what consideration he has given to moving some GP services to an online facility in order to address significant waiting lists and overcrowding in Emergency Departments.

(AQW 52792/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am keen to maximise the potential of technology to improve patients' access to services and to ease the pressure on both general practice and emergency departments. There has been significant progress to realise these benefits over recent years. A number of GP practices already operate systems that allow patients to book GP appointments or order repeat prescriptions online at a time that is convenient for them.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average length of time for the adoption process to be completed, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 52795/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: This information is included in Table 2 of the statistical publication 'Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland' which is published annually on the Department's website. It can be found at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/children-adopted-care>

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the hourly rate paid by the Western Health and Social Care Trust for domiciliary care services.

(AQW 52803/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Independent domiciliary care agencies are currently paid between £10.54 and £11.20 per hour by the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Independent domiciliary care agencies must comply with all employment legislation including minimum pay requirements. Home carers directly employed by the Trust are paid in line with national Agenda for Change pay scales, which equates to an hourly rate between £7.31 and £8.91. In addition, these hourly rates may be enhanced by a premium payable for unsocial hours.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (a) intake capacity of Greenfield Residential Care Home, Strabane; (b) number of residents; and (c) number of applications for residency in the last year, broken down by (i) permanent; (ii) temporary; and (iii) respite care places.

(AQW 52830/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on bed capacity, number of residents and vacant beds at the end of each month for January - December 2015 is detailed in the table below.

Bed Status as at:	Bed Capacity	Permanent Residents	Temporary Residents	Residents on Short Breaks/ Step-Down	Vacant Beds
31 January 2015	34	13	6	1	14
28 February 2015	34	12	6	0	16
31 March 2015	34	12	6	0	16
30 April 2015	34	13	5	0	16
31 May 2015	34	16	2	1	15
30 June 2015	34	16	1	1	16
31 July 2015	34	16	1	1	16
31 August 2015	34	14	1	0	19
30 September 2015	34	13	1	1	19

Bed Status as at:	Bed Capacity	Permanent Residents	Temporary Residents	Residents on Short Breaks/ Step-Down	Vacant Beds
31 October 2015	34	14	1	0	19
30 November 2015	34	14	1	3	16
31 December 2015	34	14	2	0	18

Source: Western HSC Trust

During 2015, a total of 27 applications were made to Greenfield Residential Care Home. This comprised of 1 application for permanent residency, 4 applications for temporary residency and 22 applications for respite/ short breaks.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following a target that no patient should wait more than 18 weeks for their first outpatient appointment, to detail why 47.6 per cent of patients are waiting more than 18 weeks.
(AQW 52853/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is regrettable that more people are waiting to be seen and are waiting longer due to the financial constraints that led to the decision to suspend independent sector and additional in-house activity last year. It was extremely frustrating that we wasted £200m of taxpayers money over the last 3 years in penalties because of the failure to implement welfare reform. Such a sum could have funded many thousands of assessments and procedures. However I was pleased to recently announce the allocation of a further £30 million, which follows the Executive's earlier allocation of £40 million to reduce waiting lists. The combined £70 million will ensure in the region of 150,000 extra assessments, tests and procedures will be completed.

Provisional figures for February 2016 show that those waiting more than 18 weeks for a first outpatient appointment have fallen by 9% and those waiting longer than 26 weeks for an inpatient day case has fallen by nearly 13%. It is clear that the investments we are directing towards waiting lists are making a difference. But it will take time and significant non recurrent and recurrent investment to bring waiting lists back to an acceptable level while simultaneously increasing capacity to meet demand. My commitment to an additional £30 million is an important step to ensuring continued progress.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the community organisations in West Tyrone that receive funding from his Department.
(AQW 52871/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Annually, my Department allocates £4.7m to the voluntary and community sector. Funding to individual organisations is listed on the Government Funder's Database and can be accessed at www.volcomgrantsni.gov.uk.

This funding is, in the main, provided to regional organisations, a number of which may provide services in West Tyrone.

A new scheme focussed on innovation in the sector is currently being developed.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of proposed Health and Social Care Trust savings for the 2016-17 budget.
(AQW 52877/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department's financial planning processes are currently ongoing and as such, this information is not available at this time.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is supporting GP federations.
(AQW 52878/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: GP Federations have the potential to increase the range of services that can be provided in primary care and to address some of the challenges currently impacting on GP services across Northern Ireland.

In December I announced a five-year investment initiative in practice-based pharmacists to work alongside GP practices through GP Federations. In addition, I have provided £190,000 in 2015/16 to support Federations to prepare and plan for their increasing role in delivering more services in the primary care setting.

My Department will continue to explore opportunities to support GP Federations to ensure the delivery of sustainable, high quality primary care services.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what opportunities will be available for jobs and apprenticeships in West Belfast as a result of the building of a regional children's hospital and a new maternity hospital on the Royal Hospital site.
(AQW 53014/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Although the employment of apprentices is the responsibility of the main contractors social clauses are contained within contracts for the work at the Maternity & Children's Hospitals which include, among other, opportunities for new trainees, and for skilled and experienced workers.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust however has no plans to appoint any additional staff at this moment in time.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the One Voice – Time for Change report by the Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care.

(AQW 53019/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I welcome the conclusions of the Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care report that excellent progress has been made over the last few decades in improving healthcare but that many challenges still remain if we are to deliver the vision for future services articulated in Transforming Your Care and Making Life Better.

I agree with the assessment that strong collective political leadership is required to allow senior healthcare professionals to concentrate on the successful delivery of the required service transformation. That is why I convened a meeting of local political parties, chaired by Professor Rafael Bengoa, to consider the principles that should underpin the future model of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding the Eastern Child Care Partnership has received from his Department in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53025/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Child Care Partnerships now align with Health and Social Care Trust boundaries and it is assumed that the question refers to South Eastern Child Care Partnership (SECCP).

My Department provides funding to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to support the operating costs of the Child Care Partnerships (CCPs). The HSCB determines the respective allocations for each partnership. The amount allocated from HSCB to SECCP during the last three years is shown below:

	Allocation to HSCB (£m)	Allocation to SECCP (£m)
2015/16	1.704	0.110
2014/15	1.659	0.110
2013/14	1.619	0.185

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding the Eastern Child Care Partnership received from his Department to fund the Children with Additional Needs support for early year's sector project, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53026/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department provides funding to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to support the operating costs of the Child Care Partnerships (CCPs). The HSCB determines the respective allocations for each individual partnership.

It is assumed the question refers to South Eastern Child Care Partnership (SECCP). Child Care Partnerships now align with Health and Social Care Trust boundaries. During the last three years SECCP has used part of their allocation to operate a small grants scheme to provide support for children with a disability who have been assessed as having additional needs.

Funding allocated to the scheme in each of these years was:

Year	Amount
2015/16	£46,033.20
2014/15	£47,970.85
2013/14	£47,840.58

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the organisations that received funding for Children with Additional Needs support for early years sector project by the Eastern Child Care Partnership; and how much funding was received in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53027/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed the question refers to the grants scheme operated by South Eastern Child Care Partnership (SECCP). Child Care Partnerships now align with Health and Social Care Trust boundaries.

During the last three years SECCP has operated a small grants scheme providing support for children with a disability who have been assessed as having additional needs. Funding was provided to the following organisations:

Provider	Amount 2015/16	Amount 2014/15	Amount 2013/14
Ardglass Community Playgroup	N/A	N/A	£2,965.20
Ballybeen Women's Centre	N/A	£3,672.00	N/A
Ballygowan Community Playgroup	£2,730.00	£2,019.65	N/A
Ballykinler Cross Community Pre-school Ltd	£1,209.60	£856.80	N/A
Ballymacash Playgroup	N/A	£918.00	N/A
Ballymacward Preschool Playgroup	N/A	N/A	£3,953.60
Bangor Abbey Pre-school Centre	N/A	£2,448.00	N/A
Bees Nees Early Learning Centre	£2,016.00	N/A	N/A
Big Red Balloon	N/A	£1,958.40	N/A
Bo-Peep Corner Pre-school Playgroup	£3,024.00	£2,639.25	N/A
Busy Bees Playgroup	N/A	N/A	£2,965.20
Chatterbox (NI) Limited	£2,188.80	N/A	N/A
Cool Kids After School Club	£4,312.00	£5,508.00	£3,953.60
Dromara Pre-school and Playgroup	£2,898.00	N/A	£2,965.20
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	N/A	£3,672.00	£3,953.60
Footprints Womens Centre	£3,276.00	£2,667.50	£2,965.22
Greyabbey Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	£3,427.20	£3,672.00	£1,978.80
Groomsport Playgroup Limited	N/A	£2,448.00	N/A
Kids Kabin	£4,536.00	N/A	£988.40
Little Doves Childcare Centre	£4,636.80	£4,896.00	£3,953.60
Little Oaks Pre-school	N/A	£2,080.80	£2,767.52
Oakwood Integrated Children's Centre	£2,808.00	N/A	£1,976.80
Play-a-way Pre-school	£1,800.00	£1,912.50	£1,976.80
Pebble Playgroup	£2,620.80	£1,530.00	£2,372.16
Rathkeltair Cross Community Playgroup	N/A	N/A	£1,976.80
Rowandale Community Playgroup	N/A	N/A	£2,965.20
Rhyme Times Playgroup	N/A	£367.20	N/A
St Finian's Pre-school	N/A	£2,295.00	N/A
Saul Pre-school	£546.00	£2,409.75	£1,976.80
Stepping Stones Day Nursery	N/A	N/A	£1,186.08
Teconnaught Playgroup	£980.00	N/A	N/A
Toddle In Pre-school (Moneyreagh)	£3,024.00	N/A	N/A

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the expansion of Omagh Hospital as part of his Department's capital budget.

(AQW 53028/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Construction works on the new Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex commenced in July 2014 and are now at an advanced stage. The construction phase is currently programmed to be completed in December 2016. This will be immediately followed with a commissioning period leading to an anticipated opening of the new hospital in early Spring 2017.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether cuts to higher education institutions have impacted on the ability of Health and Social Care Trusts to recruit nursing staff.

(AQW 53044/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The commissioning and funding of student nursing places locally is a matter wholly for my Department. There were no cuts in the number of undergraduate student nurse places commissioned for HSC by my Department from the local universities in 2015/16. We are currently considering with the universities the numbers that should be commissioned for the incoming academic year.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) whether the Western Health and Social Care Trust has difficulty in attracting permanent doctors at an affordable rate of pay given the geographical location of the Western Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) an estimation of how much the Western Health and Social Care Trust will spend on locum staff in the 2015-16 financial year; (iii) how much the Western Health and Social Care Trust has been provided with and is spending on travel and accommodation for doctors in the 2015-16 financial year; and (iv) the steps he will take to support the Western Health and Social Care Trust in recruiting affordable permanent doctors.

(AQW 53045/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Western Trust has had long running recruitment and retention difficulties in relation to all grades of medical staff, primarily due to the geographical location of the Trust;
- (ii) The Trust estimates that it will spend in the region of £13m on locum costs in the 2015/16 financial year;
- (iii) The estimated expenditure for Travel and Accommodation costs associated with Junior Doctors in the Western HSC Trust is expected to be in the region of £900k; and
- (iv) My Department will continue to work closely with Trust management to support initiatives, both monetary and non-monetary, that will facilitate the recruitment and encourage the retention of medical staff. This will include building in additional training experiences, as well as support and mentoring. I have agreed to fund additional Foundation Year One medical trainees in 2016 which will help to address these issues.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Transitions Officers in each Health and Social Care Trust that provide support to young people aged nineteen and over with learning disabilities that are transitioning.

(AQW 53050/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time Equivalent (WTE)
Belfast	6	3.46
Northern	No dedicated transition officers for this age group, however young people are supported through adult community learning disability teams	
South Eastern	No dedicated transition officers for this age group	
Southern	5 (plus a further 2 temporary staff)	4.6 (plus a further 2.0 WTE temporary staff)
Western	2	1.6

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people that attended the Bangor and Newtownards's minor injury units in each of the last two years.

(AQW 53054/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of new, unplanned and planned attendances at Bangor and Newtownards minor injuries units is published on an annual basis, and available to view or download from:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-and-ambulance-statistics>

It is important to note that the number of attendances does not equate to the number of patients treated, as it is possible for the same person to attend an emergency care department more than once during the year.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the proposed mental health extended recovery and rehabilitation facility in Omagh.

(AQW 53060/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following approval of the associated business case in June 2014, at a capital cost of £3.5m, statutory planning approval for the project was granted in December 2015. The Construction tender process is now underway and it is anticipated this will result in contract award in Spring 2016.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the process for a patient being put on the blind register.

(AQW 53067/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The registration process is as follows:

- The patient will undergo a medical assessment with a Consultant Ophthalmologist.
- There is clear medical guidance that is followed to determine if the patient is eligible to be Certified Blind or Partially Sighted.
- The Consultant Ophthalmologist completes a Certificate Visual Impairment form (CVNI) and forwards it to the Sensory Support Team in the Health and Social Care Trust that the patient resides in.
- Sensory Support team arranges to visit the service user and discuss what the CVNI form is and state that if they are agreeable, the individual can consent to being registered blind or partially sighted as indicated on the form.
- Following service user consent, the Sensory Support Team records the details of the CVNI form onto the Trust register, ensures the service user has signed the form and completes documentation to other agencies as appropriate, confirming the service user is now registered. (NB: It is only at this time does the service user become a registered blind or partially sighted person.)
- A copy of the CVNI form will be held by the Trust where the service user resides. If the service user notifies the Trust that he/she is moving to another Trust area, the CVNI will be re-directed.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ,following the opening of the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry in 2016, to detail the number of full time and part time staff that will be employed.

(AQW 53079/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The total staffing numbers for the service, when fully operational, will be approximately 216 Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) broken down between Full Time and Part Time positions as follows:

Full-time: 173.0 WTE

Part-time: 43.0 WTE.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much each Health and Social Care Trust has paid to agencies for (a) medical staff; and (b) cleaning services in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 53083/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department monitors agency spend by the following categories:

Medical and Dental, Nursing & Midwifery, Professional & Technical, Administration and Clerical, Support Services, Estates & Maintenance, Social Services, Ambulance, Prison Services and Other.

Information relating the 2014/15 financial year is provided below:

(a) Expenditure on Medical and Dental Locum agency (£)

Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
11,830,000	8,363,454	3,999,638	3,743,778	10,569,863	38,506,733

(b) Expenditure on Support Services (£)

Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
1,159,000	1,958,882	113,792	2,261,301	819,906	6,312,881

Support services category includes catering, domestic staff, laundry, sterile services, orderlies, porters, drivers, caretakers, wardens, security, and warehouse staff. It is not possible to provide a breakdown by 'cleaning services'.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety , pursuant to AQW 50188/11-16, for an update on this information as of 18 January 2016.

(AQW 53107/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is collected in weekly time bands up to 26 weeks. Patients waiting over 26 weeks are grouped into aggregated time bands up until >104 weeks. The closest time bands available to those requested have therefore been provided.

Information on the number of patients waiting over (i) 18 weeks (ii) 20 weeks (iii) 26 weeks (iv) 39 weeks (v) 52 weeks and (vi) 78 weeks in each hospital for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Number of patients waiting over the maximum waiting time, in weeks, for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by Hospital

Trust	Hospital	Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment					
		>18 weeks	>20 weeks	>26 weeks	>39 weeks	>52 weeks	>78 weeks
Belfast ¹	All Hospitals	53,246	50,893	43,779	30,049	18,482	5,614
Northern ²	Antrim	3,141	2,854	2,063	1,037	445	41
	Causeway	3,101	2,830	2,133	973	451	102
	Mid-Ulster	625	587	478	207	68	*
	Moyle	1,033	939	745	336	124	7
	Waveney	1,056	1,007	830	315	86	5
	Whiteabbey	1,316	1,245	1,033	500	182	12
South Eastern ³	Ards	337	322	248	116	10	*
	Bangor	394	349	244	76	6	0
	Downe	2,860	2,658	2,033	937	326	141
	Lagan Valley	2,944	2,666	2,058	987	448	194
	Ulster	14,088	12,834	9,686	4,663	1,998	711
	Independent Sector	7,257	7,257	7,063	5,755	3,445	330
Southern	Armagh Community	747	671	500	274	189	60
	Banbridge	190	167	139	82	28	0
	Craigavon Area	9,398	8,679	6,483	3,391	1,742	391
	Craigavon Psychiatric Unit	11	10	9	8	*	0
	Daisy Hill	3,226	2,899	2,098	1,148	732	267
	Kilkeel Primary Care Centre	14	11	*	0	0	0
	Lurgan	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mullinure	*	*	*	0	0	0
	South Tyrone	1,436	1,302	899	471	315	87
	St. Luke's	6	*	*	0	0	0
Western ⁴	Altnagelvin	7,602	7,102	5,920	3,919	2,601	665
	Roe Valley	117	75	19	0	0	0
	South West Acute	1,725	1,586	1,252	600	180	76
	Tyrone County	2,070	1,933	1,597	842	291	0
	Causeway	328	302	226	126	83	23
	Mid-Ulster	28	19	6	0	0	0

Source: HSC Trusts

* Cell sizes of less than 5 have been masked due to patient confidentiality.

This information has been provided as at the 18th January 2016 or as close to this date as possible.

- 1 Belfast Trust report waiting times, both internally and externally, at Trust level rather than hospital.
- 2 The figures for hospitals in the Northern Trust exclude the waiting times for visiting consultants.
- 3 South Eastern Trust have advised that as their PAS has been amended to reflect patients' transfer to the Independent Sector, information for these patients by hospital site could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- 4 The Western Trust has provided waiting times for Causeway and Mid-Ulster Hospital for Ophthalmology, Oral Surgery and Fracture clinics. These services are provided by visiting consultants from, and reported by, the Western HSC Trust.

To note, figures in the above table are all inclusive meaning patients waiting over 20 weeks will also be included within the figures for patients waiting over 18 weeks etc and should therefore not be added together.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 50188/11-16, (i) for his assessment of the increase in waiting times; and (ii) to detail the reason for the increases in each hospital.

(AQW 53108/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The pressures facing Northern Ireland's health service have been widely publicised. The single biggest factor impacting on waiting times has been the financial pressures faced, resulting in the decision in July 2014 to cease transferring patients to the independent sector for assessment and/or treatment, other than in orthopaedics and cardiac surgery. The number of referrals received is also continuing to increase.

The £40 million of additional funding secured in November is a much needed boost that will begin to address our waiting lists. Broadly this investment will benefit between 60,000 and 70,000 patients who would otherwise be waiting.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of outpatients waiting longer than (i) 20 weeks; (ii) 26 weeks; (iii) 40 weeks; (iv) 52 weeks; and (v) 78 weeks for their first appointment, as of 18 January 2016, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 53109/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is collected in weekly time bands up to 26 weeks. Patients waiting over 26 weeks are grouped into aggregated time bands up until >104 weeks. The closest time bands available to those requested have therefore been provided.

Information on the number of patients waiting over (i) 18 weeks (ii) 20 weeks (iii) 26 weeks (iv) 39 weeks (v) 52 weeks and (vi) 78 weeks in each hospital for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is shown in Table 1

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	Causeway	3,101	2,830	2,133	973	451	102
	Mid-Ulster	625	587	478	207	68	*
	Moyle	1,033	939	745	336	124	7
	Waveney	1,056	1,007	830	315	86	5
	Whiteabbey	1,316	1,245	1,033	500	182	12
South Eastern ³	Ards	337	322	248	116	10	*
	Bangor	394	349	244	76	6	0
	Downe	2,860	2,658	2,033	937	326	141
	Lagan Valley	2,944	2,666	2,058	987	448	194
	Ulster	14,088	12,834	9,686	4,663	1,998	711
	Independent Sector	7,257	7,257	7,063	5,755	3,445	330
Southern	Armagh Community	747	671	500	274	189	60
	Banbridge	190	167	139	82	28	0
	Craigavon Area	9,398	8,679	6,483	3,391	1,742	391
	Craigavon Psychiatric Unit	11	10	9	8	*	0
	Daisy Hill	3,226	2,899	2,098	1,148	732	267
	Kilkeel Primary Care Centre	14	11	*	0	0	0
	Lurgan	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mullinure	*	*	*	0	0	0
	South Tyrone	1,436	1,302	899	471	315	87
St. Luke's	6	*	*	0	0	0	

Trust	Hospital	Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment					
		>18 weeks	>20 weeks	>26 weeks	>39 weeks	>52 weeks	>78 weeks
Western ⁴	Altnagelvin	7,602	7,102	5,920	3,919	2,601	665
	Roe Valley	117	75	19	0	0	0
	South West Acute	1,725	1,586	1,252	600	180	76
	Tyrone County	2,070	1,933	1,597	842	291	0
	Causeway	328	302	226	126	83	23
	Mid-Ulster	28	19	6	0	0	0

Source: HSC Trusts

* Cell sizes of less than 5 have been masked due to patient confidentiality.

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- 1 Belfast Trust report waiting times, both internally and externally, at Trust level rather than hospital.
- 2 The figures for hospitals in the Northern Trust exclude the waiting times for visiting consultants.
- 3 South Eastern Trust have advised that as their PAS has been amended to reflect patients' transfer to the Independent Sector, information for these patients by hospital site could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- 4 The Western Trust has provided waiting times for Causeway and Mid-Ulster Hospital for Ophthalmology, Oral Surgery and Fracture clinics. These services are provided by visiting consultants from, and reported by, the Western HSC Trust.

To note, figures in the above table are all inclusive meaning patients waiting over 20 weeks will also be included within the figures for patients waiting over 18 weeks etc and should therefore not be added together.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to introduce a General Practitioners service for Millisle.
(AQW 53123/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board is responsible for commissioning General Practitioner services. The Board has advised that it has no current plans to introduce a General Practitioner service in Millisle. Residents of Millisle can register with nearby GP practices in Donaghadee and Ballywalter.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has any concerns regarding the safety of the glass doors at the new Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.
(AQW 53130/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The operating systems on the main doors of the Emergency Department in the new critical care centre were impacted by the extreme weather conditions over the Christmas holidays. As a precautionary measure on the evening of Tuesday 29 December 2015 the main doors of the Emergency Department were locked. Repairs were made the following day and the doors reopened.

Both the contractor and the design team are progressing a number of solutions to resolve this problem. In the interim a wind screening solution is in place.

Given the actions being implemented the Trust state they have no concerns about safety.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service accept the findings of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland with regards to the death of Joe McCloskey.
(AQW 53146/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Mrs Marie McCloskey forwarded a copy of the letter from the Attorney General, dated 6 January 2016, relating to the death of her husband Joe McCloskey, to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on 18 January 2016.

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service are currently considering the content of the letter.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the number of children being diagnosed with autism is increasing, to detail the steps his Department is taking to improve the autism assessment process.
(AQW 53163/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I recently announced an additional investment of £2m for children's autism services. This extra money will allow more specialist clinical staff to be recruited and therefore bring waiting lists down. It will also increase the capacity of the teams who provide support to young people and their families once they have a diagnosis of Autism.

The additional funding will also improve access to intervention and support services both before and following confirmation of a diagnosis of autism and the HSC Board is also in the process of undertaking a review of Autism Services that aims to modernise assessment; intervention and pre-diagnostic services.

I will continue to work with the HSC Board and Trusts to improve processes and remodel services, to further drive down waiting lists and improve admission to high quality services.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of (a) locum staff; (b) agency staff; and (c) bank staff, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53169/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information relating to expenditure by HSC Trusts on locum, agency and back staff over the last five financial years is as set out below. HSC expenditure on agency staff is incurred to ensure that safe and effective services are sustained and it contributes significantly to maintaining service provision to patients and clients

(c) Expenditure on Medical and Dental Locum agency (£)

Financial Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
2010/11	5,668,000	5,943,495	0	1,801,591	1,976,083	8,255,787	23,644,956
2011/12	8,758,000	3,015,434	0	2,220,024	2,536,412	6,563,947	23,093,817
2012/13	11,104,000	6,544,505	0	5,247,747	3,559,014	5,984,730	32,439,996
2013/14	10,597,000	6,471,403	0	4,337,914	4,206,669	6,945,615	32,558,600
2014/15	11,830,000	8,363,454	0	3,999,638	3,743,778	10,569,863	38,506,733

(d) Expenditure on Agency Staff excluding medical locums (£)

Financial Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
2010/11	7,475,000	2,522,946	481,818	4,248,255	1,311,962	3,352,514	19,392,495
2011/12	9,080,000	4,217,695	398,148	5,908,048	2,019,597	3,639,042	25,262,530
2012/13	11,823,000	5,821,828	594,441	7,982,827	5,296,763	4,719,337	36,238,196
2013/14	13,896,064	5,857,928	620,534	7,544,899	3,863,389	5,337,275	37,120,089
2014/15	15,181,000	7,304,962	615,869	5,699,557	4,092,450	5,108,039	38,001,877

(e) Expenditure on Bank Staff (£)

Financial Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
2010/11	13,691,886	6,456,999	0	5,383,486	5,627,960	4,503,477	35,663,809
2011/12	16,702,260	11,535,357	0	9,230,646	8,018,966	3,830,722	49,317,951
2012/13	17,487,697	12,236,102	13,199	10,204,060	9,427,578	5,729,016	55,097,652
2013/14	20,046,555	12,790,117	0	11,667,999	10,188,686	7,307,199	62,000,557
2014/15	20,074,000	13,156,810	21,781	12,468,879	8,889,852	9,487,760	64,099,082

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people that have died while waiting for a social service home care package to commence in the last two years.

(AQW 53180/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally and could only be provided by Health and Social Care Trusts at a disproportionate cost.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what support and information is available in the Northern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts on the transition to adult mental health services for young people with learning disabilities.

(AQW 53184/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A young person with a formal diagnosis of learning disability will be formally transitioned into Adult Learning Disability Services. Similarly, a young person with a mental health diagnosis, who requires ongoing Mental Health Services, will transition (at 18) to Adult Mental Health Services.

Learning Disability Services have the capability to manage an adult with learning disability and mental health (co-morbidity). However, if the primary presenting need was a mental health matter, there would be discussion between Mental Health and Learning Disability Services to determine the best fit for the young person, and a formal transition may be an outcome of this. This would be undertaken on a case-by-case basis and based on professional opinion.

Depending on assessed need transitioning, young people may access a range of services where individual support will be available eg: short breaks; supported living; direct payments; building and community-based day activities; social work; OT; nursing and psychology.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department plans to introduce HPV as the primary test in the cervical cancer screening programme.

(AQW 53196/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The National Screening Committee has recommended the introduction of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) testing as the primary screening test for cervical cancer.

The Public Health Agency have been asked to undertake a scoping exercise for the introduction of HPV testing as the primary screening test in the Northern Ireland Cervical Screening Programme. The Northern Ireland Screening Committee will assess the findings of the scoping exercise

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2013-2020

(AQW 53202/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The "Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland" Strategy was published on Tuesday 15 March 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what resources have been committed to the implementation of the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategy 2013-2020.

(AQW 53203/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There is no specific funding stream dedicated to implementation of priorities within the new 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' Strategy. Once the Strategy is published, each identified priority will be allocated funding via specific financial bids.

Background Note

- 1 There is no specific funding stream dedicated to implementation of priorities within the new 'Stopping Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' Strategy and all stakeholders were fully aware of this from the beginning of the development of this Strategy in 2012. The intention is that each identified priority would be allocated funding via specific financial bids.
- 2 You recently gave your approval for officials to progress the Strategy to the final stages of the policy development, subject to DoJ receiving agreement from the Justice Committee (SUB/1442/2015 refers). The final stages are to seek both Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG) and NI Executive approval to publish. All outstanding issues regarding the Justice Committee have now been settled and work to progress the Strategy to IMG is ongoing.
- 3 Following IMG and Executive approval, the Strategy can be launched. Although it is a challenging timescale, officials are working towards publication before purdah (mid-March 2016).
- 4 It is proposed to publish an initial, one year, strategic implementation plan. In the absence of a specific strategic funding stream, the plan will focus on cost-neutral measures to enhance and better utilise existing funding and services.

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Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the plans to recruit staff in the 2015-16 financial year to address waiting lists.

(AQW 53207/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Recruitment to address waiting lists is not routine. Non recurrent funding has been used in a number of Trusts to offer additional hours to current staff and employ temporary staff through bank and agency.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the investment in General Practitioner training in each of the last five years; and (ii) what evidence base has been utilised to determine the level of investment in each year.

(AQW 53217/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Expenditure on the General Practitioner Specialty Training Programme provided through the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency has been approximately £13m per annum for each of the last five years; this does not include expenditure on Continued Professional Development for the GP workforce. I have recently approved the creation of an additional 20 GP training places per year to be available from August 2016 representing a further annual investment of £1.2m in the future GP workforce. I have also allocated £50k in 2015 /16 to support the development of a GP Leadership Training Programme.
- (ii) Workforce Planning Reviews are performed to help inform GP training requirements and the associated level of investment.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to vaccinate all children under 5 years old with the Meningitis B vaccine given it has now been added to the Childhood Immunisation Programme.

(AQW 53229/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies.

JCVI recommended that the Men B vaccine is offered to all infants when they are two, four and 12 months of age. JCVI have not recommended a Men B programme for all children under 5 years of age.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI when considering the vaccination policy for Northern Ireland.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current deficit experienced by each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53236/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All HSC organisations are on target to deliver financial breakeven in 2015/16.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the self-referral physiotherapy pilot scheme.

(AQW 53238/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The self-referral physiotherapy pilot operating in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has been monitored against an agreed evaluation framework on a monthly basis by the stakeholder project board since the pilot's inception in May 2015.

An interim report was produced in December 2015 and a final evaluation report is due to come to the project board this month. This will determine the success of the model in meeting the aims set out and that will inform a Commissioner view with regard to implementing the approach on a sustainable basis across Northern Ireland.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on piloting the Atrial Fibrillation Local Enhanced Service in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Area.

(AQW 53263/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The UK National Screening Committee recommend that screening for AF should not be offered.

The Trust is currently considering ways of meeting the Stroke Commissioning Specification with regard to identification and management of AF without contravening the advice of the UK National Screening Committee. It is hoped that a proposal will be submitted for consideration before the end of the 15/16 financial year.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of regional Integrated Care Partnerships; to detail the funding they have received in each of the last two years; and how he plans to support the work of Integrated Care Partnerships going forward.

(AQW 53267/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The 17 Integrated Care Partnerships, established in June 2013, have made good progress in re-designing care for the 4 initial priority areas, namely Diabetes, Stroke, Respiratory and Frail Elderly. ICPs have been instrumental in the introduction of the Acute Care at Home service in Belfast Southern and South Eastern LCG areas; the piloting of Social Prescribing to support Frail Elderly service users, and the rationalisation of a regional Home Oxygen service.

Rather than having a ring-fenced budget of their own, individual ICPs advise their Local Commissioning Group on opportunities to commission services in a manner that could improve local service delivery. Ultimately it is the LCG who fund any such revised service. Administrative support and locum cover is centrally managed by the HSCB Integrated Care Directorate.

The Health and Social Care Board continues to work closely with Integrated Care Partnerships to support their work.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety detail (i) the number of vacant GP posts; and (ii) what action his Department is taking to ensure these positions are filled.

(AQW 53273/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of vacant GP posts is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the Health and Social Care Board to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for identifying and recruiting the number of GPs and other staff required to deliver those services.

I do recognise that GP services face a number of challenges—including rising demand and an ageing GP workforce—and my Department is taking action to ensure that services are sustainable into the future. I have recently announced an investment of £1.2m per annum to commission an additional 20 GP training places, starting in 2016/17. In December I announced a 5-year investment initiative that will put close to 300 pharmacists in GP practices by 2021, easing pressure on GPs and ensuring that patients continue to receive a high quality service. Funding of £300,000 has been made available in 2015/16 to help retain the existing GP workforce and to encourage GPs who have left practice to return. I have also provided £190,000 in 2015/16 to support GP Federations, in recognition of their potential benefits in addressing some of the challenges currently facing GP services and to support the delivery of more services in the primary care setting.

In October I established a working group to consider the delivery of services provided in GP surgeries by GPs or other professionals. This group is due to report by the end of February and I will give careful consideration to its assessment of the current position and its recommendations for the future delivery of GP-led services.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the financial implications of establishing a price regulator for domiciliary care services.

(AQW 53275/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not believe a price regulator is necessary to address the current difficulties facing the sector. I remain of the view that competitive tendering is the most appropriate way to secure best value for taxpayers as well as a fair price for suppliers.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of vacant nursing posts; and (ii) what action his Department is taking to ensure these positions are filled.

(AQW 53276/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The latest information can be found in the HSC vacancies publication, available on the DHSSPS website at:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/staff-vacancies>

My Department is leading several initiatives to address the local situation; I have recently funded and the Chief Nursing Officer has launched a Return to Practice campaign for Nurses, my officials are exploring a regional approach to overseas recruitment and I am considering increasing pre-registration nurse training places, subject to securing the necessary funding.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the strategies being pursued to address suicide among young people.

(AQW 53293/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Suicide prevention services such as counselling, awareness-raising and training, self-harm intervention, bereavement support, Lifeline crisis response, and the hospital emergency department "Card Before You Leave" appointments system are available to all age groups.

A number of actions within the Protect Life suicide prevention strategy are targeted at children and young people. These include: suicide prevention training for teachers, youth workers, and sport coaches; prevention training delivered directly to young people; the 'iMatter' programme for building school pupils' emotional resilience; the schools' counselling service; and the Arts Council 'Young People & Wellbeing Programme'.

Other services which help to address suicide in children and young people include: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) crisis intervention and home treatment; alcohol and drug education, early intervention, and treatment services; and Childline which has a role in supporting and counselling children and young people with suicidal ideation. In addition, there has been enhanced focus on cross-agency working to identify children and young people at an earlier stage of vulnerability to suicide.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of vacant beds in statutory care homes in North Down.

(AQW 53294/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At 14 March 2016, there were 4 vacancies in one statutory residential home in North Down.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people that have been registered blind in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53295/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people registered blind is not collected centrally. However, information on the number of adults known to be blind at 31 March in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Number of adults known to be blind
31/03/2015	4,497
31/03/2014	3,565
31/03/2013	4,462
31/03/2012	4,265
31/03/2011	3,416

Source: Health and Social Care (HSC) Board

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of General Practitioner training places available in each of the last five years; and how these compare with other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom **(AQW 53317/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: Information on other jurisdictions is only held for 2015/16. The remainder of the information is set out in the table below.

Training Places

	Northern Ireland	England	Wales	Scotland
2015/16	65	3235	136	317 -

I have also commissioned an additional 20 GP training places for 2016/17 which will mean that there will be one trainee per 21,294 of the population.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Greenfield Residential Care Home in Strabane.

(AQW 53325/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board has been leading on a regional review over the past two years on the future role and function of their statutory residential care homes. Greenfield Residential Care Home in Strabane is included as part of that review. However, following the announcement made by Four Seasons Health Care to close a number of nursing homes in Northern Ireland, I asked the Health and Social Care Board, as a precautionary measure, to halt and review the current process examining the future role of statutory residential care homes. My officials are liaising with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board on the review.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the meals on wheels strategy in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53326/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust's Community Meals Steering Group continues to work towards finalising a specification for the provision of a community meals service. The Trust is engaging with service users on the development of the service specification and subsequent service delivery model. The existing community meals service will operate in its current format until any new service model is agreed.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all of the Western Health and Social Care Trust's saving plans for 2016-17.

(AQW 53327/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department's financial planning processes are currently ongoing.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why people treated under the waiting list initiative have been told they are not eligible for support, including for the provision of perching stools and walking aids.

(AQW 53331/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Treatment under the waiting list initiative is not a determining factor in patients' eligibility for obtaining support from community based services. Eligibility is based on a professional assessment of need, usually by an Allied Health Professional or District Nurse, following an appropriate referral.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the people in the Omagh area are the most disadvantaged in terms of distance from acute hospital services, whether he will prioritise the Omagh area when determining the home base location of the planned new helicopter emergency medical service.

(AQW 53336/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Major Trauma Network and the Helicopter Emergency Service (HEMS) will operate in a joined-up way. For this reason, Belfast International Airport offers the greatest potential benefit as the main base for the HEMS, both practically in terms of existing infrastructure, and geographically in terms of its proximity to the greatest number of potential HEMS missions, the Major Trauma Centre, the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, and a pool of physicians and paramedics from across the region who will staff HEMS rotas. However, my Department will build on the initial operating model by exploring the potential of establishing a second staging location at St Angelo Airport in Fermanagh for servicing and particularly within the context of possible future cross-border arrangements with the Republic of Ireland to provide services in the west and north-west of Ireland. But we should be under no illusion that regardless of the location of its base our HEMS will be anything other than a service for everyone, everywhere in Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken to provide local health care in an alternative venue to the Ti Chulainn Centre.

(AQW 53347/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Any centre involved in the provision of health services at any level, must be somewhere that is a neutral environment and one that people from all backgrounds will feel comfortable accessing. It is clear that Ti Chulainn Centre does not meet this requirement.

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has used this venue for the last 3 years for biannual sessions with around 10 – 12 pulmonary rehabilitation patients. The Trust is reviewing the use of this facility taking account of the views of everyone who accesses local care services there. Alternative venues are being pursued.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to reduce the age at which people can have a smear test.

(AQW 53354/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland, the age at which cervical screening is first offered to women was increased from the age of 20 to 25 in January 2011, with screening being offered every 3 years to women between the age of 25 and 49 and every 5 years from the age of 50 to 64. This policy is in line with recommendations made by the UK National Screening Committee following consideration of the best available scientific evidence. This is also the advice of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and is the policy adopted by the majority of EU member states.

Cervical cancer is rare in young women. Current evidence indicates that screening is not effective in women under the age of 25 because those who develop cervical cancer were as likely to be screened as unscreened.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the need to establish a regional framework for the delivery of domiciliary care services.

(AQW 53369/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board has undertaken a regional review of domiciliary care provision in Northern Ireland. Its report "A Managed Change: An Agenda for creating a Sustainable Basis for Domiciliary Care in Northern Ireland" was published on 12 November. It is intended that this review will provide a regional framework for the delivery of domiciliary care services into the future.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of additional front line Northern Ireland Ambulance Service staff that have been (i) recruited; and (ii) trained in the last twelve months.

(AQW 53385/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of employees who took up post in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service via a recruitment process between 1 January and 31 December 2015 is given in the following table.

	Internal	External	Total
Ambulance Care Attendant	18	67	85
Trainee Emergency Medical Technician	66	0	66
Emergency Medical Technician	16	8	24
Paramedic	40	8	48
RRV Paramedic	5	0	5
Total	145	83	228

The number of employees who were required to undertake a formal training programme prior to undertaking operational duties between 1 January and 31 December 2015 is given in the following table.

	Internal	External	Total
Ambulance Care Attendant	0	67	67
Trainee Emergency Medical Technician	66	0	66
Total	66	67	133

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, (ii) its capacity to meet the demands on the service; and (iii) reliance on support from private ambulances.

(AQW 53386/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) employs 1,285 staff. The frontline emergency ambulance tier of the service, comprising paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs), has a funded establishment of 756 staff. There are no vacancies at paramedic grade and 80 vacancies at EMT grade. NIAS has been engaged in a comprehensive workforce stabilisation programme from March 2015 recruiting paramedics, EMTs and Patient Care staff. Two further EMT training programmes are scheduled to commence in 2016.
- (ii) The NIAS operates across Northern Ireland from 36 stations and 14 sub-stations, 2 Control Centres, a Regional Training Centre and its headquarters. Approximately 90% of the workforce is directly involved in the provision of services to patients. With this capacity the NIAS responds to approximately 150,000 emergency 999 calls and 40,000 GP calls per year. The Control Centre handles over 850,000 phone calls when dealing with this emergency and urgent workload. NIAS also operates a Patient Care Service for routine transport to and from hospital or inter-hospital transfers. Additional funding of £775,000 has been allocated to NIAS in 2015/16 and £1,077,000 recurrently from 2016/17 to manage increasing demand due to demographic growth.
- (iii) NIAS has a procurement framework in place to allow it to use voluntary and private sector ambulance services as support when there is an increase in demand, for example to help with patient flow during the winter months or with major events.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why chest drain procedures are no longer carried out in the Downe Hospital.

(AQW 53412/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Chest drain procedures are routinely carried out where as there is a respiratory physician or team in place to look after the placement, subsequent care or any complications for patients who require this procedure. The procedure requires appropriate training for clinicians and adequate patient numbers to maintain skills. This practice is in line with guidelines issued by the British Thoracic Society. Therefore in order to ensure patient safety patients requiring this procedure are transferred to the Ulster Hospital.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of ambulance response times in South Down.

(AQW 53413/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Ambulance response times are monitored by Local Constituency Group area rather than parliamentary constituency. Ambulance services in the South Down constituency area are provided by the South Eastern and Southern Divisions of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). NIAS is continuing to work with the Health and Social Care Board to improve ambulance response times as outlined in my response to AQW 50514/11-16.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the methodology used by his Department in calculating the six per cent rise in the demand for Health and Social Care services.

(AQW 53424/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The cost pressures over the previous Budget period represented some 5%-6% of the total budget each year, and have typically been in relation to pay and non-pay inflation, and the costs of meeting the healthcare needs of an aging population, including continued developments in healthcare technologies and treatments. Financial planning for 2016/17 is currently underway and is indicating a continuation of this trend.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all proposals by his Department to utilise Financial Transaction Capital to boost the local economy.

(AQW 53427/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: To date, Financial Transaction Capital (FTC) has been made available through the GP Loan Scheme which was launched by the HSCB in November 2014 for loans due to be paid out before 31 March 2016.

Consideration was also given to a similar Dental Loan Scheme, but it was not possible to develop a scheme that could meet our needs and comply with Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations.

In addition, my officials are considering a number of other potential opportunities to utilise FTC to support the HSC. These include: future primary care 3PD Projects; joint developments with local councils; community led social enterprise development schemes; and health related research and development.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the extent of elective care waiting lists in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53430/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of patients waiting for inpatient, outpatient and diagnostic treatment is published quarterly broken down by Health and Social Care Trust and speciality. The latest available information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-diagnostic-and-inpatient-waiting>

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what proportion of the total budget for the (i) Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) Western Health and Social Care Trust has been spent on domiciliary care packages and care within the community, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 53438/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The proportion of the total budget spent on domiciliary care packages by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years is as follows:
- 2012/13 – 8.13%
 - 2013/14 – 8.56%
 - 2014/15 – 8.43%
- (ii) The proportion of the total budget spent on domiciliary care packages by the Western Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years is as follows:
- 2012/13 – 5.20%
 - 2013/14 – 5.65%
 - 2014/15 – 5.93%

Care within the community covers a wide range of services for adults and children it is not possible to provide details of the spend in this area.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of the differentials between the Health Service and the private sector for all medical procedures contracted out to the private sector.

(AQW 53494/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information is not held centrally and would only be available at disproportionate cost

Mr I McCreagh asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department has spent on interpreters in each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53498/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Total Expenditure on interpreters, in each of the last three financial years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, is set out in the table below.

Health & Social Care Trust	2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	1,360,065	1,309,514	1,358,177
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	914,466	755,307	717,799
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	416,995	435,605	364,641
Western Health & Social Care Trust	218,512	246,952	216,809
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	158,789	158,931	119,151
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	354	658	995
Total	3,069,182	2,906,967	2,777,572

* **Source:** NI Health & Social Care Interpreting Service

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has any plans to publish awareness campaigns to improve the uptake of cervical screening.

(AQW 53542/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department and the Public Health Agency (PHA) promote the uptake of cervical screening in a range of ways including local media releases, social media and activities at key times of the year, such as during Cervical Cancer Prevention Week in January and Cervical Screening Awareness week in June.

There are currently no plans to develop a specific public information campaign for cervical screening. There is no evidence to suggest that an awareness campaign would have a significant and sustainable impact on the number of women who attend their cervical screening appointment. Experience from previous events, when cervical cancer has had a high media profile in the UK, suggests that any impact is short-term and may not influence those who have never previously attended.

After evaluating the findings from a PHA commissioned focus group study on the reasons for non-participation in cervical screening, the PHA believes the barriers to participation are best addressed through a peer educator programme rather than a public awareness campaign. The PHA is therefore working through the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) to target those groups of the population who are less likely to participate in cancer screening, to support them to make an informed decision.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to setting a time limit by which non urgent referral patients have to be seen to ensure people are not waiting indefinitely.

(AQW 53553/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department's elective care targets include maximum waiting times. The waiting time target for a first outpatient appointment states that no patient should wait longer than 18 weeks and the target for inpatient or day case treatment states that no patient should wait longer than 26 weeks. Patients are seen according to clinical urgency and then in chronological order.

It is regrettable that more people are waiting to be seen and are waiting longer due to the financial constraints that led to the decision to suspend independent sector and additional in-house activity last year. It was extremely frustrating that £9.5m was being lost back to Westminster from Northern Ireland's public finances every month as a result of welfare reform being blocked. Such a sum could fund many thousands of assessments and procedures. However, the allocation of £40 million in the November Monitoring Round has allowed me to begin tackling waiting lists.

I would assure the Member that I find excessive waiting times unacceptable and, for the longer term, I have tasked the Health and Social Care Board with preparing a plan to cope with demand going forward in order to stabilise waiting times and put them on a sustainable footing. I expect to receive this plan soon.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to allocate resources to early years intervention services for deaf children.

(AQW 53565/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: An antenatal hearing screening programme is in place and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is currently completing work on a clinical pathway for children with sensory disabilities where parents have concerns in relation to their child's hearing or sight loss.

Within early education, Health and Social Care provides a service through the multi-disciplinary teams funded under the Children and Young Person's funding package which allows children with additional needs to be identified and referred as appropriate. Each HSC Trust has a multi-disciplinary team and work is being taken forward to ensure consistency in the operational model, which is being revised to include early years as well as early education settings.

HSC and the Education sector also work collaboratively in the identification and assessment of children with special educational needs as required under legislation including the recently amended Special Educational Needs legislation.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a profile of the ambulances used in responding to emergency work according to the vehicle's (a) age; and (b) mileage.

(AQW 53570/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details the age and mileage profile at 31 December 2015 of accident and emergency vehicles, rapid response vehicles and two neonatal vehicles which can respond to emergency incidents.

Mileage	Age (Years)						Total
	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	
0-9999	13	-	-	-	-	-	13
10000-19999	11	4	3	-	-	-	18
20000-29999	4	8	2	-	-	-	14
30000-39999	-	6	2	1	-	-	9
40000-49999	-	6	-	2	-	-	8
50000-59999	-	4	4	2	1	-	11
60000-69999	-	2	3	5	3	-	13
70000-79999	-	2	2	3	1	-	8
80000-89999	-	1	-	1	2	1	5
90000-99999	-	-	-	1	2	1	4
100000-109999	-	-	2	4	2	1	9
110000-119999	-	-	2	3	4	1	10
120000-129999	-	-	4	-	-	-	4
130000-139999	-	-	-	3	-	2	5
140000-149999	-	-	1	3	2	-	6
150000-159999	-	-	1	1	2	-	4
160000-169999	-	-	-	4	2	-	6
170000-179999	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
180000-189999	-	-	-	1	2	-	3
190000-199999	-	-	-	1	2	-	3
> 200,000	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Total	28	33	26	36	28	7	158

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department has taken following the Early Years Intervention for Deaf Children Conference in March 2014.

(AQW 53572/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The principles of early intervention have been accepted across the remit of all of children's services and are central to the direction within Transforming Your Care.

Since the conference, the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) has been established to promote an outcome based model of early intervention for children across a range of services. This is a generic programme. With the advent of the Children's Services Cooperation Act, which has recently become law, the duty now exists across all statutory agencies to cooperate in assisting children.

In addition, the Health and Social Care Board, as part of the Regional Implementation Group for my Department's Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy Action Plan, is developing a specific pathway for those with hearing loss and this will include children.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number; and (ii) proportion of elective operations that were cancelled in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53582/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information collected on the total number and proportion of elective operations cancelled in each year from 2012/13 to 2014/15, broken down by HSC Trust has been provided in the table below.

The table includes operations cancelled / postponed due to both clinical and non-clinical reasons, as well as patient cancellations. Non-clinical reasons include list over-run, emergencies/trauma, etc. while clinical reasons are those where the patient was clinically unsuitable to undergo the procedure, though these lists are not exhaustive.

Please note that any operations that were cancelled but are still clinically required will be rescheduled, and these can be classed as postponements.

Information is not available prior to April 2012 when the associated Indicator of Performance was introduced.

The percentage of elective operations cancelled¹/ postponed by patients or for clinical/non clinical reasons in Northern Ireland, by HSC Trust: 2012/13- 2014/15

	Total number of cancelled operations			Percentage cancelled		
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Belfast HSC Trust*	4,591	3,927	6,454	4.9%	4.4%	6.8%
Northern HSC Trust	3,371	2,667	2,500	11.3%	9.1%	8.4%
South Eastern HSC Trust	4,406	3,835	3,687	12.8%	11.2%	11.2%
Southern HSC Trust	2,187	1,468	1,465	7.8%	4.3%	4.1%
Western HSC Trust	2,727	2,071	2,493	7.4%	5.9%	6.7%

Source: P9 Cancelled Operation Information Return

1 Includes only those operations cancelled on the day of, or up to two days before the planned operation.

* This report excludes Belfast City Hospital figures for February and May 2013 and Royal Group Figures for January, February and March 2014 due to technical faults.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the reliance of the full implementation of Transforming your Care on the commissioning of services from within the independent sector.

(AQW 53589/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Transforming Your Care is about transforming the model of care we provide while making best use of the expertise and resources available.

Implementation of service changes to deliver that model of care continues, focused on putting individuals at the centre of care and improving outcomes for patients and service users. The Independent Sector has an important role to play in the delivery of those flexible, responsive patient centered services.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children (a) with scoliosis (b) that are currently waiting for spinal surgery; and (c) waiting for consultant appointments.

(AQW 53596/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Information on the number of children diagnosed with scoliosis is not readily available.
- (ii) Information is based on children who are currently waiting for spinal surgery in the Belfast Trust. There are currently 43 patients aged 18 years or under with scoliosis, who are waiting for spinal surgery within the Belfast Trust.
- (iii) Reason for referral, or confirmed diagnosis, is not collected for patients waiting for a first consultant-led appointment. It is therefore not possible to separately identify patients with scoliosis.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to ensure that the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust restores 24 hour Emergency Department cover in Lisburn.

(AQW 53623/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust took the decision to implement a temporary closure of Lagan Valley Hospital's emergency department at weekends from 4 January 2014 in order to ensure patient safety. The closure was because of a shortage of suitably qualified middle grade doctors. Prior to that the emergency department had operated from 8am to 8pm seven days a week.

Despite a number of recruitment campaigns, the Trust has been unable to secure sufficient medical staff to return to the previous opening times. The Trust will shortly be embarking on a further recruitment campaign to seek to fill middle grade vacancies across its emergency departments.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much each Health and Social Care Trust has spent on heating oil in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53643/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Details of the costs of heating oil for each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years are set out in the table below:

Health & Social Care Trust	2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £
Belfast	325,489	217,776	568,433	923,656	708,880
Western	1,359,059	1,114,023	2,265,263	1,944,304	1,647,762
Southern	1,264,080	2,718,486	3,264,156	3,035,626	3,042,708
Northern	722,494	689,805	1,011,716	954,832	855,886
South Eastern	643,120	591,504	584,818	747,203	1,074,957
N.I. Ambulance Service	55,039	75,514	77,847	87,737	70,121
Total	4,369,281	5,407,108	7,772,233	7,693,358	7,400,314

Source: Trust Financial Returns

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of post-primary school children that took part in Local Intervention Fire Education courses in 2015.

(AQW 53674/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In 2015, 45 post primary school children completed the Local Intervention Fire Education course.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail when he expects Professor Raphael Bengoa's report on the Health Service to be completed.

(AQW 53677/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My expectation is that Professor Bengoa will submit his report to the Health Minister by the summer of this year.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why eligible patients are entitled to less than one full cycle of IVF treatment unlike patients in Scotland or Wales.

(AQW 53702/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At present in Northern Ireland, one cycle of IVF/ICSI is provided to Health and Social Care patients and, provided the patient was referred on or after 1 April 2012, one frozen embryo transfer.

My Department has endorsed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline on Fertility (CG156) which, among other things, recommends that women should be offered three full cycles of IVF. Unfortunately due to budget pressures since the current policy was introduced in 2008, it has not yet been possible to fully implement the clinical guideline or increase the number of IVF cycles offered to patients as there are significant cost implications. The decision by my predecessor to bring the Northern Ireland policy fully into line with the updated NICE guideline means that we will have to consider very carefully the commissioning implications within the context of other competing health and social care services requiring new investment in the years ahead.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to implement the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines that recommends the provision of three full cycles of IVF.

(AQW 53703/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At present in Northern Ireland, one cycle of IVF/ICSI is provided to Health and Social Care patients and, provided the patient was referred on or after 1 April 2012, one frozen embryo transfer.

My Department has endorsed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline on Fertility (CG156) which, among other things, recommends that women should be offered three full cycles of IVF. Unfortunately due to budget pressures since the current policy was introduced in 2008, it has not yet been possible to fully implement the clinical guideline or increase the number of IVF cycles offered to patients as there are significant cost implications. The decision by my predecessor to bring the Northern Ireland policy fully into line with the updated NICE guideline means that we will have to consider very carefully the commissioning implications within the context of other competing health and social care services requiring new investment in the years ahead.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has he given to introducing a phased implementation of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence recommendations that eligible couples should receive three full cycles of IVF.

(AQW 53704/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At present in Northern Ireland, one cycle of IVF/ICSI is provided to Health and Social Care patients and, provided the patient was referred on or after 1 April 2012, one frozen embryo transfer.

My Department has endorsed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline on Fertility (CG156) which, among other things, recommends that women should be offered three full cycles of IVF. Unfortunately due to budget pressures since the current policy was introduced in 2008, it has not yet been possible to fully implement the clinical guideline or increase the number of IVF cycles offered to patients as there are significant cost implications. The decision by my predecessor to bring the Northern Ireland policy fully into line with the updated NICE guideline means that we will have to consider very carefully the commissioning implications within the context of other competing health and social care services requiring new investment in the years ahead.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) GP; and (ii) nursing vacancies in West Tyrone.

(AQW 53759/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: (i) The information requested is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the HSCB to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors they are responsible for deciding on and recruiting additional GPs and other staff required to deliver services to their patients.

(ii) The Western HSC Trust is currently recruiting to 3 (2.39 whole-time equivalent) nursing vacancies in the West Tyrone area.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of community nurses in West Tyrone that have been moved into acute care in the last three years.

(AQW 53760/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: No nursing posts in West Tyrone have been transferred from a community to an acute setting by the Western HSC Trust in the last three years.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current number of hospitalised patients that require twenty-four hour care but cannot be discharged from hospital as a result of a lack of available places in nursing or care homes.

(AQW 53765/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has set a target for Health and Social Care Trusts that 90% of complex discharges from an acute hospital take place within 48 hours with no complex discharge taking more than seven days. The latest available information in respect of complex discharges shows that in October 2015 there were 57 patients whose discharge was delayed more than 48 hours because no residential home, nursing home or Elderly Mentally Infirm beds were available. It is not known how many of these patients required twenty-four hour care.

The Unscheduled Care Network, jointly led by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency, is actively investigating possible solutions to improve discharge performance. In the meantime Health and Social Care Trusts monitor patient discharges and have local measures in place to mitigate the effects of delayed discharges.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the additional pressure on hospitals caused by patients that cannot be discharged because of a lack of available places in nursing or care homes.

(AQW 53766/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has set a target for Health and Social Care Trusts that 90% of complex discharges from an acute hospital take place within 48 hours with no complex discharge taking more than seven days. The latest available information in respect of complex discharges shows that in October 2015 there were 57 patients whose discharge was delayed more than 48 hours because no residential home, nursing home or Elderly Mentally Infirm beds were available. It is not known how many of these patients required twenty-four hour care.

The Unscheduled Care Network, jointly led by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency, is actively investigating possible solutions to improve discharge performance. In the meantime Health and Social Care Trusts monitor patient discharges and have local measures in place to mitigate the effects of delayed discharges.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are statistics on the number of lethal abnormalities detected in pregnancies.

(AQW 53768/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not routinely collect information on the number of lethal abnormalities detected in pregnancies.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the percentage of posts in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service that are vacant; and the longest period that a vacancy has existed.

(AQW 53770/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Vacancies are defined as posts to which an organisation was attempting to recruit at a survey date. As such, it is important to note that a high vacancy rate can be evidence of growth of posts within a staff group, rather than recruitment difficulties or large numbers of extant unfilled posts. Posts counted as vacancies may also be covered by temporary staff or re-allocated staff and so do not equate to unoccupied posts. Between March 2011 and December 2015, the whole-time equivalent (WTE) number of NI ambulance staff increased by 4%.

While at 30 September 2015 the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) had 170.34 WTE vacancies, a WTE vacancy rate of 14.2%. 119.36 WTE of these vacancies were for Emergency Medical Technician posts created as part of an internal training and recruitment initiative. At that date, NIAS had been attempting to fill its longest-standing vacancy since June 2014.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the longest ambulance downtime at each hospital in the last month; and (ii) on how many occasions downtime exceeded two hours.

(AQW 53771/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on ambulance turnaround times detailed in this response refers to the time between an ambulance arriving at the emergency care department and it 'clearing' the location. The crew will remain with the patient until they have been handed over to the relevant clinical personnel within the HSC Hospital environment. The ambulance turnaround time will include patient handover and other aspects such as the time to clean and replenish the ambulance for the next call.

- (i) Information on the longest ambulance turnaround time at each hospital during January 2016 is not currently available.
- (ii) The number of occasions that ambulance turnaround times exceeded 2 hours in January 2016 is detailed below 1.

Hospital	Number
Craigavon Area	20
South West Acute	12
Ulster	8
Daisyhill	6
Royal Victoria	4
Lagan Valley	3
Belfast City	2
Altnagelvin Area	1
RBHSC	1
Royal Maternity	1

Source: Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)

- 1 The information provided relates to all ambulance journeys, including urgent and routine patient journeys in addition to those resulting from emergency calls.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail whether (i) his Department is aware of plans to close Newtown Stewart Health Centre; (ii) his Department has plans to amalgamate Newtown Stewart Health Centre with Castleberg Health Centre; and (iii) any assessment has been made of the impact on the health outcomes of the local community in terms of accessing local GP services.

(AQW 53794/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are no plans to close Newtown Stewart Medical Centre. GP practices are independent contractors that provide services to patients under a contract with the Health and Social Care Board, and they can choose to form partnerships. An agreement has recently been reached for Castleberg Group Surgery, Newtown Stewart Medical Centre and Ederney Surgery to amalgamate and form a new partnership, Western Rural Health Care. This development will ensure continuity of care for the local community—the full range of general medical services will continue to be available to patients and patients will continue to access services at their current practice location.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail when the service notifications for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Technological Assessments TA369 - TA374 inclusive will be published; and where no service notification has yet been published when this is expected.

(AQW 53813/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below shows when the HSCB published its service notifications for TA369 to TA374 inclusive, or the expected publication date, as appropriate.

TA	Endorsed by DHSSPS	Service Notification Issued / Due to be Issued by HSCB
TA 369	04/01/2016	15/04/2016
TA 370	04/01/2016	15/04/2016
TA 371	04/01/2016	11/01/2016
TA 372	05/01/2016	18/04/2016
TA 373	05/01/2016	18/04/2016
TA 374	11/01/2016	25/04/2016

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has any plans to sell the land leased by the Burn Equestrian Centre, Knockbracken, given the close proximity of housing developments to the land.

(AQW 53821/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Department owned land and buildings located at Knockbracken Healthcare Park are leased to Staff Services (NI) Limited. Until these are declared surplus by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Department is not able to consider disposal.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his departmental budget for advertising and promotions for TV, radio and newspapers between 1 January 2016 and 31 March 2016.

(AQW 53825/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department's budget for advertising and promotions for TV, radio and newspapers between 1 January 2016 and 31 March 2016 is nil.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) GP; and (ii) nursing vacancies in North Down.

(AQW 53829/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The information requested is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the HSCB to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors they are responsible for deciding on and recruiting additional GPs and other staff required to deliver services to their patients.
- (ii) The South Eastern HSC Trust is currently recruiting to 2 (1.02 whole-time equivalent) nursing vacancies in the North Down area.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the future provision of daycare facilities in Gortin, Co. Tyrone.

(AQW 53867/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust's proposals for the reform of its day care services for older people were recently considered by the Health and Social Care Board and their advice has been forwarded to the Department. My Department is currently considering the Health and Social Care Board's recommendation.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of providing home care services to the users of Gortin Day Care Centre, Co Tyrone given the Western Health and Social Care Trust's proposal to close the centre.

(AQW 53868/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust does not routinely collect information on costs relating to the provision of home care services for the users of Gortin Day Care Centre. To obtain this information would require it to undertake a review of the case file of each person attending the day care centre and would be at disproportionate cost.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can provide assurances that the 144 Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency staff based at Gransha Park, Derry will be maintained in the North West.

(AQW 53895/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. The consultation included my proposals to de-layer the existing system by moving away from the current commissioning model and closing down the Health and Social Care Board. No decisions have been taken about the location of jobs in the future structure. However, I realise that during this period of significant change staff will be concerned. It is not my Department's intention to cause unnecessary upheaval for staff impacted.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the GP Development scheme as introduced by the Health and Social Care Board.

(AQW 53897/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I value the vital contribution that GPs make to the provision of health care in Northern Ireland and want to ensure that GP services are sustainable into the future. As part of a package of investment in GP services in 2015/16, up to £300,000 has been made available to recruit and retain GPs.

The GP Development Scheme is comprised of two elements - the Returner/ Induction Scheme and the Retainer Scheme.

The Returner/Induction scheme, which commenced in 2013/14, aims to ensure that GPs trained outside the NHS, or who have not worked in the NHS for 24 months or more, can be appropriately inducted and have the necessary skills for the provision of General Medical Services. The scheme includes a test to assess knowledge; an assessment placement in a practice to assess needs, develop a training plan and establish the length of programme required; and a workplace-based assessment undertaken in a training practice and satisfactory completion of the NHS logbook signed-off by the trainer. Since its inception, eight GPs have completed the programme and three are progressing through it. The HSCB has recently reviewed the scheme to take account of changes in England and the context of the GP workforce supply.

The Retainer scheme is designed to enhance capacity in general practice and avoid the loss of GPs to other sectors or to the Northern Ireland workforce. The scheme, which has recently been revised, will provide a supportive working environment and mentoring with a continuing professional development element. To build confidence in delivering urgent care and out of hours services, the revised scheme will require participation in one out of hours session per month. It is anticipated that the scheme will offer 20 places per year each lasting a maximum of 2 years.

In recognition of the pressures facing GP services, including the need to support more GPs to remain in or return to practice. I have established a working group to consider the challenges facing GP-led services. The working group is due to report back to me by the end of February. I will give careful consideration to its recommendations.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) nurse; and (ii) GP vacancies in East Londonderry; and how many of these are specialist practice positions.

(AQW 53907/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: (i)The information requested is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the HSCB to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors they are responsible for deciding on and recruiting additional GPs and other staff required to deliver services to their patients.

(ii)The East Londonderry constituency is split between the Western and Northern Health and Social Care Trusts. The Western HSC Trust is currently recruiting to 2 (1.80 whole-time equivalent) Band 5 nursing vacancies in Dungiven. Neither of these is a specialist practice position. The Northern HSC Trust covers the Coleraine area within East Londonderry, and is currently recruiting to 8 (6.04 WTE) qualified nursing and midwifery vacancies in that area, all at the Causeway Hospital. None of these is a specialist practice position.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 51794/11-16, given his response of 3 February 2016 stating that he will make a decision in due course, whether he is aware of the response from the Western Health and Social Care Trust dated 25 January 2016 that states the implementation of the Trust's new service model for day care services for older people will continue to move forward, which is in contrast with his response.

(AQW 53942/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust's proposals for the reform of its day care services for older people were recently considered by the Health and Social Care Board and their advice has been forwarded to the Department. My Department is currently considering the Health and Social Care Board's recommendation. I am not aware of any response from the Western Health and Social Care Trust dated 25 January 2016.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his (a) Department; and (b) its arm's-length bodies has spent on office supplies in each of the last five years.

(AQW 53945/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: • Departmental costs on office supplies in each of the last five years are set out in the table below:

2015/16(1) £	2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £
130,267	254,715	385,304	409,049	391,455

Note (1): 10 months ended 31 January 2016

- Information on costs for Arm's Length Bodies is not held centrally and its extraction would entail a significant manual exercise across these organisations. As such, this information is not readily available and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how his Department is working with Health and Social Care Trusts to reduce delays in patient referrals for elective surgery at the North West Independent Hospital in Ballykelly.

(AQW 53955/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have been advised by the Health and Social Care Board that all patients for elective surgery have now been transferred to the North West Independent Hospital in Ballykelly.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the future of the delivery of statutory domiciliary care services in the Sion Mills and Newtownstewart areas of the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 53988/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western HSC Trust's reform of its domiciliary care service is due to be completed by 31 March 2016. The Western HSC Trust continues to provide statutory domiciliary care services to all areas of the Trust, including Sion Mills and Newtownstewart.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the terms of reference for his Department's review into the Domiciliary Care Workforce.

(AQW 53994/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Terms of Reference for the Steering Group for the Department's Workforce Review of Domiciliary Care detailed below:

Workforce Review – Domiciliary Care

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee and direct the Workforce Review of domiciliary care which will inform planning to ensure the availability of a domiciliary care workforce to meet future demand and redesigned services. The Review will consider the recommendations for the future skills required to ensure a competent workforce that can deliver the agreed model(s) of robust domiciliary care services into the future to support the implementation of Transforming Your Care over the next five years.

Definition of domiciliary care – *The range of services put in place to support an individual in recognition of their human rights in their own home. Services may involve routine household tasks within or outside the home, personal care of the client and other domestic services necessary to maintain an individual in an acceptable level of health, hygiene, dignity safety and ease in their home.*

While it is not possible to disaggregate between groups (older people, adults and children with a range of care needs) without disproportionate cost, it is significant that approximately 80% of recipients of domiciliary care are Older People.

Membership/Timeline of the Project Steering Group

- 2 Membership of the Steering Group has been drawn from DHSSPS, HSC Trusts both HR and service delivery representatives, NISCC, HSCB, Independent Healthcare Providers, DEL and Staff side. A full list of membership is attached at **Annex A**.

The Steering Group will meet 4 – 6 weekly in advance of the RWPG meetings and at appropriate times to guide the work of the Project Working Group. Meetings will be held in Castle Buildings and secretariat to the group will be provided by DHSSPS.

It is anticipated that the workforce review will be completed by 31 March 2016.

Role and Responsibilities of the Steering Group

3. The Steering Group has been convened to oversee and direct the review and its role will be to:
 - agree the terms of reference of the Project Working Group to include the scope of the review;
 - quality assure the workforce intelligence gathered;

- advise on the strategic direction of the domiciliary workforce including the need for capacity building within the public health service to meet the need for domiciliary care;
- support and contribute to the development of the report;
- provide advice, guidance and validation to the review;
- facilitate provision of information from their organisations in a timely manner;
- input information and advice drawing from their own expertise
- ensure effective communication and dissemination of information between participating organisations; and
- receive, make recommendations and approve the Workforce Plan on Domiciliary Care

Annex A

Updated 2/6/15

**Regional Workforce Planning Group
Workforce Review Domiciliary Care
Steering Group Membership**

Name	Organisation
Heather Stevens (Co-chair)	DHSSPS – Workforce Policy Director
Christine Smyth (Co-chair)	DHSSPS - Deputy Chief Social Services Officer
Peter Barbour	DHSSPS – Workforce Policy Directorate
Erin Montgomery	DHSSPS - Information and Analysis Directorate
Mervyn Langtry	DEL – Head of Skills Solution
Anne Speed	Staff Side
Margretta Chambers	
Pauline Shepherd	Independent Health & Care Providers
Marie Ward/Raymond Irvine	Western HSC Trust
Melanie McClements	Southern HSC Trust
Una Cuning	Northern HSC Trust
Kevin Keenan	HSCB
Patricia Higgins	NISCC
Joanne McKissick	Patient and Client Council
Await nominee	Carers NI

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all actions being considered by his Department in terms of alleviating the current waiting lists for children's autism services.
(AQW 53999/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My recent announcement of an additional £2m investment for autism services will address the current waiting lists; and improve access to intervention and support services both before and following confirmation of a diagnosis of autism.

This money will be used to employ additional Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists. The HSC Board is also in the process of undertaking a review of autism services which aims to modernise assessment, intervention and pre-diagnostic services. The outcome will be used to inform the services requirement to improve access to care for children and young people and their families.

A range of actions are also being carried out by the Health and Social Care Trusts with the additional £250k non-recurrent funding allocated in December 2015 to alleviate the current waiting lists for children's autism services which are detailed in the attached **Annex**.

Annex**Specific Actions Being Undertaken by HSC Trusts to Address Waiting List for Children's Autism Services****Belfast Trust**

- Paediatrics and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are to provide additional hours to complete assessments;
- Speech and Language Therapy staff are to carry out additional Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule assessments.

Northern Trust

- Provision of additional evening and Saturday clinics;
- Additional diagnostic hours for Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy;
- Contract with Autism Initiatives for intervention measures;
- Additional hours provided for intervention.

Southern Trust

- A Locum Paediatrician provided 15 additional autism assessments in November;
- Additional sessions were secured with a Clinical Psychologist which has resulted in the provision of 11 additional assessments being completed;
- Additional evening and Saturday clinics.

South Eastern Trust

- Temporary recruitment of posts to backfill some of the roles of professional staff – Psychology Assistants; Family Support Workers; Speech and Language Therapy Assistants;
- Additional hours and overtime;
- Additional evening and Saturday clinics.

Western Trust

- Internal recruitment of appropriately skilled staff from within core services, with subsequent backfill;
- Additional administration staff to support services;
- Enhancement of existing contracts with Third Sector Organisations;
- Additional Saturday clinics;
- Additional intervention therapists recruited to manage the increase in those diagnosed with Autism.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of local pharmacists.
(AQW 54004/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is the regulatory body for pharmacists in Northern Ireland and maintains the register of pharmacists. I have been advised by the PSNI that there were 2,308 pharmacists on the register at 1 February 2016.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what support his Department is giving to community based drug addiction support groups in North Down.
(AQW 54022/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, a range of alcohol and drug education, early intervention, and treatment and support services are commissioned from a number of providers by the Public Health Agency in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area. These services are available to people living in North Down, and while a number are targeted specifically at supporting local communities, all are designed to provide appropriate advice, guidance, support and treatment for those who have issues with substance misuse. In particular, the Connections Service hosted by ASCERT provides support to the South Eastern Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team to address local issues and raise awareness of drug and alcohol problems across the SEHSCT area.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when Northern Ireland will reach a prescribing rate of 35 per cent for novel oral anticoagulant use for patients with atrial fibrillation as set out by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in June 2014; and (ii) the current prescribing rate for Northern Ireland broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 54029/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Clinical Guideline (CG180) on the management of atrial fibrillation recommends that anticoagulation should be offered to people with a CHA₂DS₂-VASc score of 2 or above, taking bleeding risk into account. Anticoagulation may be with apixaban, dabigatran etexilate, rivaroxaban or a vitamin K antagonist. The clinical guideline does not recommend a prescribing rate. The prescribing levels in Northern Ireland of non vitamin K oral anticoagulants specifically for atrial fibrillation are not available.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered introducing a scheme similar to the Refugee Doctors' Programme in Scotland that assists asylum seekers or refugees that are doctors and live in Scotland to achieve registration with the General Medical Council.
(AQW 54031/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have no plans to introduce a scheme similar to the Refugee Doctors' Programme in Scotland. I am aware that there is assistance with registration available for asylum seekers or refugees coming to Northern Ireland through UK-wide schemes run by the General Medical Council and the British Medical Association.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether social workers that are employed through agencies receive the same pay and rewards as other Allied Health Professionals similarly employed on Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

(AQW 54032/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Health and Social Care Trusts can engage Agency Workers via an "Agency Workers Framework" Agreement. The rates payable are commercial arrangements between the agency provider and the Trust and are influenced by a number of factors including supply and demand, long-term supply of qualified staff for permanent employment and a desire to avoid creating barriers to long term employment. Rates payable therefore differ for each staff group.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when the new Innovative Fund will be open to applications; (ii) the funding panel; (iii) whether the funding will be for three or five years; and (iv) the criteria for funding.

(AQW 54084/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A consultation on proposals for a Health and Social Care Innovation Fund began on 7 March 2016. This seeks views on funding criteria, duration and decision-making processes.

Following the twelve week consultation period, and the development of final proposals, it is intended that the Fund will launch during the 2016/17 financial year.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the links his Department has with organisations that raise awareness of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and ME; and (ii) any assistance his Department has provided to these organisations to ensure people with these conditions receive appropriate care and treatment.

(AQW 54093/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is in regular communication with organisations that raise awareness of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and ME, especially when these services are being reviewed. Departmental officials have met with Hope 4 ME / CFS to discuss service provision.

The HSCB has recently provided a small ex gratia sum to one group to cover the expenses of an educational event for GPs. In the past, the Department, through the Business Services Organisation, has facilitated circulation of flyers (electronically) to GP surgeries to raise awareness of events being organised by these groups.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his (a) Department; and (b) its arm's-length bodies has spent on energy bills in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54099/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Expenditure on energy costs (comprising electricity, oil and gas) for this Department and each of its Arm's-Length Bodies, in each of the last five years, is set out in the table below:

	2014/15 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2010/11 £'000
DHSSPS	178	213	247	256	212
Health and Social Care Board	192	226	240	235	135
Belfast HSC Trust	15,341	17,113	16,804	15,363	12,535
Northern HSC Trust	5,863	6,532	6,365	5,746	4,535
Southern HSC Trust	5,671	6,819	6,827	6,087	5,759
South Eastern HSC Trust	5,570	6,110	5,841	5,586	5,357
Western HSC Trust	6,932	7,373	8,179	6,724	4,623
NI Ambulance Service	109	134	138	134	125
Business Services Organisation	400	384	404	308	244
Public Health Agency	67	86	75	16	33
Patient Client Council	7	13	12	12	15
NI Fire & Rescue Service	155	178	180	131	117
NI Practice & Education Council	7	6	9	7	7
NI Social Care Council	11	14	14	14	16
NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency	16	13	15	10	17

	2014/15 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2010/11 £'000
NI Blood Transfusion Service	311	355	360	263	234
NI Medical & Dental Training Agency	23	20	21	20	19
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority	30	28	22	22	18
Total	40,884	45,619	45,754	40,932	34,001

* Source: DFP & Trust, HSCB, PHA and ALBs Financial Returns.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the opportunities for patients to take part in drug trials for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

(AQW 54103/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Drug trials for the treatment of various conditions are led by clinicians with a special interest in the appropriate disease area based in each of the Trusts. In the case of Alzheimer's disease, patients can ask their hospital physician about opportunities to participate in drug trials, which will vary from time to time in each Trust.

The Dementia Clinical Interest Group of the Northern Ireland Clinical Research Network, which is funded by the HSC Research and Development Division of the Public Health Agency, provides infrastructural support for the conduct of clinical trials in the area of dementia. Currently three clinical research studies in dementia are being conducted through the network, one of which is a drug study, and two studies are currently under consideration.

In addition to drug studies, the HSC R&D Division funds a range of other clinical research projects and trials which are specifically seeking to address the needs of patients with Alzheimer's disease and their families. Seven studies have been funded or co-funded since the start of 2014, with a total budget of over £2 million.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients that have been discharged as hospital inpatients and that are currently unable to return to their home within the East Antrim area but have been located (a) temporarily to a Northern Health and Social Care Trust facility outside their home post code area; and (b) to an independent residential home or nursing home outside their home post code area.

(AQW 54106/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) Three patients have been discharged as hospital inpatients and are currently unable to return to their home within the East Antrim area but have been located temporarily to a Northern Health and Social Care Trust facility outside their home post code area.
- (b) Eight patients have been discharged as hospital inpatients and are currently unable to return to their home within the East Antrim area but have been located to an independent residential home or nursing home outside their home post code area.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of beds available to treat patients at Inver House, Larne; and to account for any changes in the number of available beds and in the referral of patients since 2011.

(AQW 54108/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently sixteen available beds, two less than in 2011. In line with the normal level of demand for these beds. At times of pressure, the number of beds can be increased to the 2011 levels to meet extra demand.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any new drugs available for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

(AQW 54114/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland, there are currently four drugs recommended for dementia in Alzheimer's disease. These are donepezil, rivastigmine, galantamine and memantine. No new drugs for Alzheimer's disease have come to the UK market since memantine in 2002.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much money his Department has spent on treating epilepsy in the last three years.

(AQW 54116/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not collect specific data for expenditure on epilepsy services. This is recorded in the overall expenditure data collected for Neurology specialities, however, this cannot be broken down into specific conditions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given his plans to dismantle the Health and Social Care Board, for his assessment of the impact on the Health and Social Care Board jobs presently located in the County Hall, Ballymena.

(AQW 54119/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. The consultation included my proposals to de-layer the existing system by moving away from the current commissioning model and closing down the Health and Social Care Board. No decisions have been taken about the location of jobs in the future structure. However, I realise that during this period of significant change staff will be concerned. It is not my Department's intention to cause unnecessary upheaval for staff impacted.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurance exist for staff currently employed by the Health and Social Care Board in County Hall, Ballymena that they will continue to be posted in Ballymena following the cessation of the Health and Social Care Board.

(AQW 54120/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. The consultation included my proposals to de-layer the existing system by moving away from the current commissioning model and closing down the Health and Social Care Board. No decisions have been taken about the location of jobs in the future structure. However, I realise that during this period of significant change staff will be concerned. It is not my Department's intention to cause unnecessary upheaval for staff impacted.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people that have (a) been diagnosed with; and (b) died from sepsis, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54130/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people diagnosed with sepsis is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The following table shows the number of deaths from sepsis registered in Northern Ireland by Health and Social Care Trust, during 2012 to 2014, the latest year for which figures are available.

HSC Trust	Year of Registration		
	2012	2013	2014
Belfast	26	23	16
Northern	13	26	19
South Eastern	16	25	9
Southern	10	22	13
Western	9	12	10
Northern Ireland	74	108	67

Source: Demography and Methodology Branch

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the expansion of the Medical Foundation Programme, whether this will enable doctors on the programme to receive their training and experience in Health and Social Care Trusts outside the greater Belfast area.

(AQW 54150/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Foundation Programme already locates doctors in training across all five Health and Social Care Trusts, as set out in the table below. Of the 15 additional places in the programme from August 2016 that I announced in February, 11 will be based in the Western Trust and four in the Southern Trust.

Trust	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	NHSCT	WHSCT
Foundation places	199	82	65	86	67

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to review the process by which Direct Payments are awarded by Health and Social Care Trusts for the care of children and adults.

(AQW 54172/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have a duty to provide a direct payment to an individual with eligible needs, if the HSC Trust is satisfied that the individual's need for support can be met appropriately by means of a direct payment.

Direct payments can be a very useful tool in supporting people to take control of their own care and promoting choice. As part of the Reform of Adult Care and Support, my department is examining the future role of direct payments, in order to ensure that the system is making the best use of this important mechanism for providing care.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of staff working at Northfield House residential home in Donaghadee
(AQW 54180/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are 26 (18.3 whole-time equivalent) staff employed by the South Eastern HSC Trust at Northfield House. Trust bank staff also work at the home, as and when required.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what in-year departmental cuts have been made to community and voluntary sector funding; and how this compares to cuts to other services.
(AQW 54186/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has not made any in-year cuts to core funding received by voluntary and community sector organisations.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of long stay patients with a learning disability that are waiting to be resettled from Muckamore Abbey; (ii) the reasons for the delay in resettling the patients; and (iii) how many patients are there as a result of a (a) delayed discharge; and (b) complex discharge.
(AQW 54192/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently 24 long stay patients with a learning disability that are waiting to be resettled from Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

The delay in resettling these patients is due the completion of specialist placements being customised to the patients' individual needs, predominantly within new supported living and nursing/residential developments.

There are 48 patients who have had a decision to discharge taken but are still in Muckamore Abbey hospital more than 7 days later.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all the community health initiatives his Department has funded in North Down, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 54206/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Service changes in response to Transforming Your Care have been developed and delivered by a variety of HSC and Community & Voluntary organisations. Many of these patient centred services integrate elements from Primary, Community and Acute Sectors alongside contributions from the Community and Voluntary sector. Some of the key areas in which work is being taken forward to deliver the model of care set out in Transforming Your Care include Integrated Care Partnerships, Reablement, Health and Care Centres and Self Directed Support.

Also in relation to the following service areas - Population health and wellbeing, Delivering services closer to home, Older People's Services, Support for Carers, Palliative and end of life care, Mental Health, Learning Disability, Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment and Family and Child Care

Given the range of service areas involved, and the integrated and regional nature of many service changes, it would not be practical to provide the level of detail requested.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the investment his Department has made in Fermanagh and South Tyrone since 2011.
(AQW 54209/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Capital Investment is provided to HSC Trusts and the NI Fire and Rescue Service to develop and maintain the estate which is accessed by patients and clients across Northern Ireland on the basis of need and not by parliamentary constituency. I have provided details of capital investment for infrastructure which is located in Fermanagh and South Tyrone since 2011.

Trust / ALB	Project	Spend £'000
Southern	Medical Equipment	1817
	Estates Works	744
	South Tyrone Hospital – Remedial Works	1769
	CT Scanner	1077
	IT	617
	Transport	360

Trust / ALB	Project	Spend £'000
Western	Modular Ambulance Station at former Erne Hospital Site	405
	Minor Capital Works	1,700
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)	Enniskillen Ambulance Station	313
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)	Detection Identification & Monitoring (DIM) equipment	26
	Camera	24

Information on other capital investment by NIAS in Fleet, Estate and IT is not held on a constituency basis and to provide information in this detail would be disproportionate.

The South West Acute Hospital with an estimated capital value of £274m was procured through PFI and utilisation of unitary charge payments

Revenue funding is not provided on a constituency basis, nor does my Department capture or hold this information centrally. The level of detail requested can therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of his Department's spend in the Glens area in each year since 2010.
(AQW 54222/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Funding is not provided on a constituency basis, nor does my Department capture or hold this information centrally. The level of detail requested can therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has plans to expand capacity within Belfast for elective care procedures and assessments.
(AQW 54232/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is investing significant recurrent resources of approximately £7.5 million in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for elective care in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to expand capacity in a range of areas including cardiac surgery, spinal surgery, MRI, breast surgery, gastroenterology, orthopaedics and ENT. Plans are also being developed to address the continued increase in demand for diagnostic services including endoscopy, CT, non-obstetric ultrasound and plain film x-rays. Planning is also underway with Integrated Care Partnerships to modernise care pathways in orthopaedics, pain, rheumatology, dermatology and gynaecology services with the aim of reducing demand for hospital-based consultant appointments and providing primary care based alternatives.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people aged 18 and under were admitted to Emergency Departments for (a) deliberate self-harm and (b) psychiatric conditions in each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.
(AQW 54234/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) The number of self-harm presentations¹ at emergency care departments for those aged 18 and under, is detailed in the table below for each of the last three years:

Year	Health and Social Care Trust (HSC Trust)					
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Northern Ireland
2014/15 ^a	573	297	271	258	280	1,679
2013/14	442	269	342	199	213	1,465
2012/13	396	203	345	188	221	1,353

Source: Northern Ireland (NI) Registry of Self-Harm.

¹ The number of presentations does not equate to the number of people, as a person may present at an emergency care department more than once during the year.

a Information for 2014/15 is provisional and maybe subject to change.

Information on self-harm presentations is published yearly by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and is available to view or download from the link below:

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Annual%202013%2014%20Report%20NIRSH_0.pdf

- (b) Information on the number of attendances at emergency care departments presenting with psychiatric conditions is not available.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Health Service staff that have been dismissed and the reasons for their dismissal broken down by (a) staff role; and (b) Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54235/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the tables below.

Belfast HSC Trust

2015

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Catering assistant	Conduct
Mental Health Nurse	Conduct
Physio Support Worker	Attendance/Health
Admin /Clerical	Attendance/Health
Acute Nurse Support	Attendance/Health
Admin & Clerical	Conduct
Domestic	Conduct
Catering Assistant	Conduct
Domiciliary Care Worker	Conduct
Domestic	Conduct

2014

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Admin & Clerical	Attendance/Health
Security Officer	Conduct
Admin & Clerical	Conduct
Admin & Clerical	Attendance/Health
Residential Worker	Conduct
Nursing Assistant	Attendance/Health
Nurse	Attendance/Health
Admin & Clerical	Attendance/Health
Care Assistant	Attendance/Health
2x Domestic	Attendance/Health
Domiciliary care worker	Conduct
Catering Assistant	Attendance/Health
Admin Manager	Conduct
Store person	Conduct

2013

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Porter	Attendance/Health
Driver	Conduct
3x Domestic	Attendance/Health
Nursing Assistant	Conduct

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Home Help	Conduct
Nursing Auxiliary	Attendance/Health
Admin & Clerical	Conduct
2x Catering Assistant	Attendance/Health
Nursing Assistant	Conduct

Northern HSC Trust**2015**

Role	Reason for Termination
3x Admin & Clerical	Attendance/Health
7x Domestic Assistant	Attendance/Health
7x Nurse	Attendance/Health
Catering Assistant	Attendance/Health
Cook	Attendance/Health
2x Social Worker	Attendance/Health
7x Support Worker	Attendance/Health
17x Homecare Worker	Attendance/Health
3x Nurse Support	Attendance/Health
Porter	Attendance/Health
Housekeeper	Conduct
Medical Secretary	Conduct
Nurse	Conduct
Porter	Conduct
Health Care Assistant	Conduct
Mental Health Support Worker	Conduct
Radiography Helper	Conduct

2014

Role	Reason for Termination
Clinical Psychologist	Attendance/Health
Pharmacist	Attendance/Health
7x Domestic Assistant	Attendance/Health
4x Nurse	Attendance/Health
Catering Assistant	Attendance/Health
2x Social Worker	Attendance/Health
Support Worker	Attendance/Health
3x Senior Support Worker	Attendance/Health
13x Homecare Worker	Attendance/Health
Car Parking Officer	Attendance/Health
2x Nurse Support	Attendance/Health
2x Porter	Attendance/Health
2x Homecare Worker	Conduct

Role	Reason for Termination
Porter	Conduct

2013

Role	Reason for Termination
7x Admin & Clerical	Attendance/Health
2x Catering Assistant	Attendance/Health
12x Domestic Assistant	Attendance/Health
21x Homecare Worker	Attendance/Health
Driver	Attendance/Health
Medical Technical Officer	Attendance/Health
5x Nurse	Attendance/Health
7x Nursing Support	Attendance/Health
Radiographer	Attendance/Health
Porter	Attendance/Health
3x Support Worker	Attendance/Health
Telephonist	Attendance/Health
Trainee Social Worker	Attendance/Health
2x Social Worker	Attendance/Health
Nurse	Conduct
Homecare Worker	Conduct
Driver	Conduct
Midwifery Support	Conduct
Pantry Assistant	Conduct

South Eastern HSC Trust**2015**

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Acute Nurse Support	Conduct
Consultant	Conduct
Facilities	Conduct
Pharmacy Support	Conduct

2014

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Physical Disability/Sensory Improvement Social Worker	Attendance/Health
Home Helps/Domiciliary Care	Conduct
Acute Nurse Support	Conduct
Acute Nurse Support	Conduct
Admin & Clerical	Conduct
Mental Health Social Worker	Conduct

2013

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Acute Nurse	Conduct
Mental Health Support Nurse	Attendance/Health
Elderly Social Worker Support	Conduct
Mental Health Nurse	Attendance/Health
Child/Family Soc Worker	Conduct

Southern HSC Trust**2015**

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Admin and Clerical Officer	Conduct
Staff Nurse	Conduct
Learning Disability Support Worker	Attendance/Health & Conduct
Staff Nurse	Conduct

2014

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Domestic Services Assistant	Conduct
Staff Nurse	Conduct
Administrative and Clerical Officer	Conduct
Domestic Assistant	Conduct
Speciality Doctor – Dermatology	Conduct

2013

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Staff Nurse	Conduct
Domiciliary Care Worker	Conduct
Support Services Assistant	Attendance/Health
Domiciliary Care Worker	Conduct

Western HSC Trust**2015**

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Social Worker	Conduct
Nursing	Conduct
Nursing Support	Conduct
Home Carer	Attendance/Health
Support Services	Conduct
Support Services	Attendance/Health

2014

Role	Reason for Dismissal
Social Worker	Conduct

Role	Reason for Dismissal
5 x Nursing	Conduct
Nursing Support	Conduct
Support Services	Attendance/Health
Support Services	Conduct

2013

Role	Reason for Dismissal
2 x Nursing	Conduct
Care Assistant	Conduct
Social Work Support	Attendance/Health
3 Support Services	Conduct
3 x Nursing Support	Conduct
Maintenance Assistant	Conduct
4 x Support Services	Attendance/Health

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of times debt repayments to his Department have been written off; and (ii) the value of the debts for each year in since 2010.

(AQW 54246/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There have been no debt repayments to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety that have been written off since 2010.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding is being provided to the community and voluntary sector in terms of (i) grants; (ii) grants-in-aid; and (iii) procurement in the 2015-16 financial year, including any projected spend.

(AQW 54251/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Funding provided by government departments to the voluntary and community sector is published on the Government Funders Database (GFD) which can be accessed at <https://govfundingpublic.nics.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

Funding is also provided to the third sector from Health and Social Care bodies. Due to the number of voluntary and community organisations involved, information relating to funding by other HSC bodies could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, in 2012 work carried out by my Department estimated that the Third Sector was in receipt of over £100m from the HSC at that time.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any meeting undertaken by (i) his Department; and (ii) employees of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the Human Transplantation Bill, including the (a) dates of the meetings; and (b) attendees

(AQW 54253/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials from my Department met with clinicians and specialist nurses from the field of organ transplantation on 15 December 2015 in relation to the Human Transplantation Bill. Correspondence that I received from the Health Committee during the course of its consideration of the Bill indicated that Members were in favour of seeking to remove the clause which dealt with deemed consent, and instead wanted to explore the possibility of redrafting the Bill in a way that would give primacy to 'family consent'. This would have rendered proposed Departmental amendments on a deemed consent Bill irrelevant. The Bill would have been discussed in the course of briefing I have received from officials since taking up my post as Minister. It would not be possible to provide details of these meetings.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why proposed departmental amendments to the Human Transplantation Bill provided to the Bill Sponsor were not, as stated in a letter to the Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety provided to the Health Committee.

(AQW 54254/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials from my Department met with clinicians and specialist nurses from the field of organ transplantation on 15 December 2015 in relation to the Human Transplantation Bill. Correspondence that I received from the Health Committee during the course of its consideration of the Bill indicated that Members were in favour of seeking to remove the clause which

dealt with deemed consent, and instead wanted to explore the possibility of redrafting the Bill in a way that would give primacy to 'family consent'. This would have rendered proposed Departmental amendments on a deemed consent Bill irrelevant. The Bill would have been discussed in the course of briefing I have received from officials since taking up my post as Minister. It would not be possible to provide details of these meetings.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any meetings he attended at which the Human Transplantation Bill was discussed, including the (i) dates of the meetings; and (ii) attendees.

(AQW 54255/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Officials from my Department met with clinicians and specialist nurses from the field of organ transplantation on 15 December 2015 in relation to the Human Transplantation Bill. Correspondence that I received from the Health Committee during the course of its consideration of the Bill indicated that Members were in favour of seeking to remove the clause which dealt with deemed consent, and instead wanted to explore the possibility of redrafting the Bill in a way that would give primacy to 'family consent'. This would have rendered proposed Departmental amendments on a deemed consent Bill irrelevant. The Bill would have been discussed in the course of briefing I have received from officials since taking up my post as Minister. It would not be possible to provide details of these meetings.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Health and Social Care Board is withholding any funding towards the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for autism assessments.

(AQW 54261/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board has not withheld any funding towards the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for autism assessments. The HSC Board gave the Belfast Trust an additional £100k recurrent funding in September 2015 to establish an autism early intervention and support service. The Board also provided the Belfast Trust with an additional £50k non-recurrent funding in December 2015 to help to address its autism waiting lists.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on treating autism in the last three years.

(AQW 54262/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details the recurrent funding allocation to HSC Trusts for autism services in 2015/16. HSC Trusts were also provided with an additional £50k each in 2015/16 to help address the waiting lists.

2015/16	Children	Adults	Total
Belfast Trust	743,671	149,068	892,739
Northern Trust	600,997	209,754	810,751
South Eastern Trust	507,391	142,445	649,836
Southern Trust	1,056,322	183,460	1,239,782
Western Trust	766,848	189,914	956,762
Total	3,675,229	874,641	4,549,870

Please see response to AQW 40024/11-15 for the detail of spend on Autism services for previous years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of reported cases of Swine Flu in 2016, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54264/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 'swine flu' detections between 1st January and 11th February 2016, is detailed in the table below:

HSC Trust	Number of H1N1 virology (Swine Flu) detections
Belfast	71
Northern	29
South Eastern	22
Southern	40
Western	10
Location not specified	50
Northern Ireland	222

Information on the number of people who have had or currently have 'swine flu' is released weekly by the Public Health Agency (PHA) at the following link:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/influenza-weekly-surveillance-bulletin-northern-ireland-20152016>

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the perinatal hospice and palliative care available in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 54268/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Health and Social Care Trusts provide parents with care and support that is best suited to their wishes and circumstances. While the services provided varies across Trusts it includes: counselling for the parents and family; discussions on parents' wishes for palliative and end-of-life care; parents' rooms for nursing and family visits; and, active care and support in hospital, at the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice, or through hospice care at home. Trusts also advise parents of other external organisations that can offer support.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following his announcement of an additional £2m funding for autism services to detail (i) when the expected 35 additional positions within the local Health and Social Care Trusts will be filled; (ii) how long will appointed staff undertake training prior to contact with patients; and (iii) what additional funding will be provided for autism services as a result of this announcement in the 2015-16 financial year.

(AQW 54269/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The HSC Board has started engagement with the HSC Trusts and service users to develop a new autism service model, to which new additional staff will be recruited. The HSC Trusts will be responsible for the recruitment process, which will seek to employ additional Psychologists; Speech and Language Therapists; Occupational Therapists, and Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists. It is anticipated that recruitment will be completed by the end of December 2016. Whilst these permanent posts are being recruited, the investment will be used on a temporary basis to reduce the waiting lists.
- i) Following recruitment; training needs will be identified, and the HSC Trusts will source and coordinate delivery as appropriate.
- ii) An additional £260k non-recurrent funding has already been provided in the latter part of 2015/16 to address the waiting pressure for autism assessments.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) waiting times for autism assessments; and (ii) the number of people waiting for autism assessments in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54273/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Tables 1 and 2 detail the number of people (children and adults) waiting for an autism assessment, and the period of time waiting in the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust at 31 December 2015.

Table 1: No. of children waiting at 31 December 2015

Waiting Time (weeks)								Total
0 - 4	4 - 8	8 - 13	13 - 18	18 - 26	26 - 39	39 - 52	>52	
51	72	86	95	152	146	70	11	683

Source: Health & Social Care Board

Table 2: No. of adults waiting at 31 December 2015

Waiting Time (weeks)				Total
0 - 4	4 - 6	6 - 9	>9	
8	5	7	9	29

Source: Health & Social Care Board

An increased investment of an additional £2 million for Autism Services across Northern Ireland was announced on 14 February 2016. This new financial support will fund expanded teams in each HSC Trust in order to improve assessment times and access to Autism specific support services.

The Department will also continue to work with the HSC Board and Trusts in order to improve processes and remodel services to further drive down waiting lists and improve access to high quality services.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much additional funding the Northern Health and Social Care Trust will receive from the extra allocation of funding towards the Ambulance Service. (AQW 54274/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The additional funding which the Health and Social Care Board has allocated to manage the increasing demand due to demographic growth has been allocated to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust, not to local Health and Social Care Trusts. Approximately £395,000 of the £1.077 million allocated will be invested in the Northern Local Commissioning Group area in 2016/17.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the extra £2m allocated for autism services will be allocated. (AQW 54279/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The additional funding allocated for autism services will address the current waiting lists; and improve access to intervention and support services both before and following confirmation of a diagnosis of autism. The resource will be used to employ additional Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists.

The HSC Board is also in the process of undertaking a review of Autism Services which aims to modernise assessment, intervention and pre-diagnostic services. The outcome will be used to inform the services requirement to improve access to care for children and young people and their families.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average length of time care packages were registered with the call bureau before being assigned in each of the last three years, broken down by month. (AQW 54297/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information is not available.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the length of time current individuals have been receiving a temporary care reablement package; and (ii) the same information for this date for each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 54298/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The reablement service is a planned, intensive and time-limited service lasting 6 weeks or less, designed to maximise the service user's independence. The table below reflects the length of stay on reablement of clients discharged from the service during 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Clients Discharged from Reablement by Length of Stay on the Service

HSC Trust	2013/14		2014/15	
	< 6 weeks	> 6 weeks	< 6 weeks	> 6 weeks
Belfast	94.0%	6.0%	88.2%	11.8%
Northern	54.0%	46.0%	48.8%	51.2%
South Eastern	84.5%	15.5%	81.9%	18.1%
Southern	98.1%	1.9%	97.8%	2.2%
Western	85.1%	14.9%	75.6%	24.4%
Total	80.5%	19.5%	77.0%	23.0%

Source: HSC Board

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of clients that were registered through the call bureau with a domiciliary care package that had yet to commence at the beginning of each month in the last three years. (AQW 54299/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed that the term call bureau in the question refers to a care bureau model. Information on the number of care packages registered through the "care bureau model" is not available in the format requested and some of the HSC Trusts responded that this information is not routinely collected and could only be obtained by a manual trawl of information which incur disproportionate costs.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for an estimation of the number of domiciliary care hours that are required in each Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) to detail the total number of providers of domiciliary care in each Health and Social Care Trust and the number of care hours each is offering.

(AQW 54300/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The number of domiciliary care hours required by each Health and Social Care Trust (year end 2014) is set out in the table below:

Domiciliary Care Hours	HSC Trust					
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	
Direct Payments - Independent	365,244	391,821	310,712	458,136	262,579	1,788,492
Independent	1,684,603	1,322,056	2,765,883	1,630,214	1,461,205	8,863,961
Statutory	963,992	1,399,402	755,073	1,107,191	586,747	4,812,405
Total	3,013,839	3,113,279	3,831,668	3,195,541	2,310,531	15,464,858

- (ii) There are 82 domiciliary care providers across all Health and Social Trusts. The Health and Social Care Board does not hold information on the number of providers active in each Trust area (some providers will be active in more than one Trust area). The number of care hours offered by each provider is not held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will consider the recommendations in a recent report titled *Old Problems, New Solutions*, that was produced by the Commission on Acute Adult Psychiatric Care, established by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, when determining the future delivery of local psychiatric services.

(AQW 54306/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I welcome any publication that aims to enhance mental health care. In this case, the report *Old Problems, New Solutions* is about improving acute psychiatric care for adults in England. While clearly the report has value, the general position on mental health services in Northern Ireland is somewhat different. For example, Northern Ireland does not have the same level of private sector inpatient provision, lacks some specialist services that could impact on acute inpatient demand, and geographical distances are smaller.

In recognition of this, and the benefits of individualised reports addressing regional issues, the Commission decided to publish separate reports for England and Northern Ireland. I understand that the Northern Ireland report will be published later this year, and I will consider the recommendations in that report in detail when determining the future delivery of local psychiatric services.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of how much more will it cost annually to pay staff in the domiciliary care sector following the increase in the minimum wage to £9 per hour; (ii) whether he intends to increase the budget to cover these additional costs; and (iii) to detail any proposed budgetary increase over the next three years for this sector.

(AQW 54307/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I recognise that the domiciliary care sector is currently facing significant challenges including the increase in the National Minimum Wage.

The Health and Social Care Board Report on Domiciliary Care, which was published on 12 November 2015, will inform the Domiciliary Care Workforce Review. This piece of work is currently being led by my Department under the auspices of the Regional Workforce Planning Group and, once completed, will inform financial decision-making in relation to the domiciliary care sector.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultations have been carried out with Trade Unions on the tender MTC- Framework for Building Response Maintenance Works for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust ITT Stage.

(AQW 54320/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Staff in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) are not impacted by this tender, therefore the Trust did not consider it necessary to consult with the Trade Unions. Those affected by the tender will be the employees of the Trust's external Contractors. I understand that the Trust has contacted Trade Union colleagues to clarify the situation.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following the recently announced £2m investment in autism services, to detail (i) what level of additional funding will be allocated to adult autism services; and (ii) whether there will be a projected increase in staff for adult autism assessment teams.

(AQW 54321/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Whilst there is an acknowledgement that referrals to adult autism services continue to rise, the recent £2m investment in autism services is specifically targeted at children's service.

As part of the wider reform of autism services regionally the Health and Social Care Board will be working with the Health and Social Care Trusts to review the scope and range of adult provision, with a view to identifying new ways of building capacity across services.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is any provision for additional funding for the fees of a resident of a care or residential home when they are forced to leave that home and find a new home following the closure of their original home.

(AQW 54324/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: If the placement is arranged a managed by the resident's local HSC Trust, then this will not cost a resident any more than their current placement. However, personal choice remains a key part of the system. A Trust is required to arrange care in a resident's preferred home where possible, although this may have financial implications for the resident.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number of people in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Area waiting for care packages; and (ii) geographical areas affected.

(AQW 54331/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At 16 February 2016, there were 246 clients waiting for a care package in the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. A breakdown by client locality is detailed in the table below.

Clients Waiting for a Care Package at 16 February 2016

Client locality	Number of clients
Ballymoney, Coleraine, Moyle	40
Larne, Carrick, Newtownabbey	75
Antrim, Ballymena	71
Magherafelt, Cookstown	60
Total	246

Source: Northern HSC Trust

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his Department's plans to enhance the provision of person centred day opportunities for people with a learning disability; and to detail the number of (i) day centres for people with learning disabilities that have closed or are identified for closure; and (ii) places that will be lost in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54332/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Work on implementing a new Model for Day Opportunities for People with Learning Disabilities is progressing across all HSC Trust areas to ensure the range and quality of opportunities for those with a learning disability across NI is more consistent.

A breakdown of this progress is provided in the attached Annex.

Annex

Update on Model for Day Opportunities for People with Learning Disabilities

The Model for Day Opportunities for people with learning disabilities was launched in 2014 following consultation.

A Regional Cross-Departmental Group was set up in October 2014 and Local Implementation Groups were set up in the five HSC Trusts in 2015 which measured provision against the Model Phase 1. A Carers Regional Sub Group was developed in September 2015.

Engagement events have been undertaken with staff; service users; carers and providers, and an Individual Person Centred analysis was completed regionally.

A Review of current Building Based facilities is being undertaken to identify the requirements for the future, and Trusts are developing Business Cases for new (fit-for-purpose) day centres, which meet service users' needs.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development was recently awarded a contract to fund the 'Rural Support' post for the development of Social Farming and a Regional Integrated Passenger Transport Group was set up and led by the Department for Regional Development to look at efficient and sustainable passenger transport arrangements including Day Opportunities.

(i) Day centres for people with learning disabilities that have closed, or are identified for closure

No day centres for people with learning disabilities have closed, or been identified for closure in the Northern; South Eastern; Southern, or Western Trusts. Belfast Trust has however recently concluded a consultation exercise regarding day opportunities, which included a proposal regarding the potential closure of the Fallswater Centre. In accordance with the Regional Model and the Trust proposal, any future decision to close a day centre would not lead to any places being lost as there would be re-provision to day opportunities.

(ii) Places that will be lost in each Health and Social Care Trust

No places will be lost in any of the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the average time individuals waiting for assignment of an escalated care package have been registered with the call bureau before being assigned an escalated care package, for each month of the last three years; and (ii) what provisions are in place to provide escalated care for these individuals in their homes during the period of time they are awaiting for assignment of an escalated care package.

(AQW 54344/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) It is assumed that the term call bureau in the question refers to a care bureau model. Information on the average time individuals have been waiting for an increased domiciliary care package, for each month of the last 3 years, is not held centrally and was therefore requested from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses are provided below.

Northern HSC Trust

The relevant data is not routinely collected and could only be obtained by an extensive manual exercise which would incur disproportionate costs. As at 26 February 2016 there were 93 individuals waiting on an increased domiciliary care package, and the average waiting time was 8.5 weeks.

Belfast HSC Trust

The relevant data has only been collated since December 2015, and to obtain information for the last three years would require an extensive manual exercise which would incur disproportionate costs.

Western HSC Trust

The relevant data is not routinely collected and would require an extensive manual exercise which would incur disproportionate costs.

South Eastern HSC Trust

The relevant data has only been collated since 10 January 2016, and to obtain information for the last three years would require an extensive manual exercise which would incur disproportionate costs. Since 10 January 2016 there have been 191 referrals to its Domiciliary Care Referral Hub for an increased domiciliary care package, and the average waiting time was 2.3 days.

Southern HSC Trust

The relevant data has only been collated since December 2014, and to obtain information for the last three years would require an extensive manual exercise which would incur disproportionate costs. As at 25 February 2016 there were 16 individuals waiting on an increased domiciliary care package and the average waiting time was 1.94 months.

- (ii) Trusts will consider a range of alternative options such as reablement services, support from voluntary groups, additional support from families/carers, and respite placement in a care home, for individuals who are waiting on an increased domiciliary care package. Key workers in Trusts will continue to monitor and support individuals until such times as the increased care package becomes available.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, when a complaint made on behalf of a family has been investigated by the Health and Social Care Trust and if the family are dissatisfied with the outcome, whether there is any opportunity for outside bodies or an alternative Health and Social Care Trust to investigate.

(AQW 54350/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The HSC Complaints Procedure, published in April 2009, details the procedures for members of the public should they wish to make a complaint about HSC funded treatment which they receive in any HSC setting. A copy of the procedures can be accessed at:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/HSC%20Complaints%20-%20Standard%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Resolution%20and%20Learning%20-%20Updated%20February%202015.pdf>

The guidance aims to promote an open process with speedy, fair and, where possible, local resolution. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied, following completion of the HSC Complaints process, the complainant will be advised of their right to refer their complaint to the NI Commissioner for Complaints (the Ombudsman).

The Patient Client Council offers a free, confidential, patient advocacy service and may also be able to offer information and support should a complainant wish to take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

There is no provision to refer a complaint to another organisation for investigation.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how long Hydrogen Peroxide and Peroxyacetic acid have been used in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) whether they are still in use; (iii) what are they used for; and (iv) whether they are fully licensed.

(AQW 54351/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) These substances are widely used in all Trusts – ranging from more than 20 years in Southern Trust to 5 years in Western Trust.
- (ii) They are still in use.
- (iii) Hydrogen Peroxide as a dilute solution is widely used for skin disinfection, mouthwash and gargle. Stronger solutions are used to sterilise equipment in Renal dialysis units and in the decontamination of facilities as part of Infection Prevention and Control measures.

Peroxyacetic Acid is widely used for the decontamination and disinfection of endoscopes.
- (iv) Where used these substances are appropriately licensed by the manufacturer and regulatory bodies

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current provision of specialist Multiple Sclerosis nurses within the Causeway Hospital; and to detail how provision has changed in the last three years to meet the demand for this service.

(AQW 54358/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In January 2012 the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust appointed a 0.5 wte MS Specialist Nurse located in the Route Complex, Ballymoney. This post covers the Northern Trust area. The Belfast HSC Trust is commissioned to provide a Regional MS Specialist Service. This service includes:

conducting reviews and commencing patients on disease modifying drugs as prescribed by the neurologist; provision of drug infusions at the Royal Victoria Hospital; and, a Regional helpline for people with MS.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of refurbishment for Northfield House, Donaghadee by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54365/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The cost of refurbishing Northfield House, Donaghadee, would be in excess of £2million.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on producing material in Irish in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54374/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department did not produce any material in Irish in each of the last three years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much the Northern Health and Social Care Trust spent on agency staff in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 54378/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each Health and Social Care Trust, for the 2014/15 financial year.

Trust	2014/2015
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	£27.0m
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	£7.8m
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	£9.7m
Western Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m

Source: HSCTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much the Southern Health and Social Care Trust spent on agency staff in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 54379/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each Health and Social Care Trust, for the 2014/15 financial year.

Trust	2014/2015
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	£27.0m
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	£7.8m
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	£9.7m
Western Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m

Source: HSCTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust spent on agency staff in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 54381/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each Health and Social Care Trust, for the 2014/15 financial year.

Trust	2014/2015
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	£27.0m
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	£7.8m
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	£9.7m
Western Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m

Source: HSCTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust spent on agency staff in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 54382/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each Health and Social Care Trust, for the 2014/15 financial year.

Trust	2014/2015
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	£27.0m
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	£7.8m
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	£9.7m
Western Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m

Source: HSCTs

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why he has not published Termination of Pregnancy guidelines; and when they will be published.

(AQW 54394/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I have sought the agreement of Executive colleagues to publish the Guidance for Health and Social Care Professionals on Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland. The member may be aware that up to now, my guidelines have been opposed by his own party colleagues who sit on the Executive. When agreement is obtained, the guidance will be published.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any concerns have been raised with him regarding the use of toxic materials, such as arsenic and benzene, being used in the manufacture and laying of 3G sports pitches. (AQW 54396/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: No concerns have been raised with my Department about the manufacture and installation of 3G sports pitches.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to making patients waiting for appointments within each specialty (i) personally; and (ii) publicly aware of the amount of time which they are likely be expected to wait for an appointment following an initial referral from their GP.

(AQW 54397/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Patients can enquire from their Health and Social Care Trust hospital appointment booking centre or their GP what the current waiting times are locally for individual specialties. My Department publishes information on regional waiting times for elective care quarterly on its website at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research/hospital-waiting-times-statistics>.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will report on his review of the independent residential and nursing care sector; and to detail the terms of reference for this review.

(AQW 54399/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- To re-examine the proposals for closures in light of the emerging challenges facing the adult care sector, in particular to consider issues around capacity, accessibility, quality and sustainability. This will include reconsideration of the local needs assessment exercises which informed the original proposals for change.
- To consider whether sufficient independent sector capacity can be identified to ensure a secure supply of appropriate places on a regional basis to meet demand.
- To consider the timing of any proposed closures with particular reference to the current perceived instability in the market.
- To consider whether there is a requirement to review the current position on admissions as a means of addressing current challenges in the care sector.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many of the 254 older people affected by the Four Seasons Care Home closures have been appropriately resettled.

(AQW 54400/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As at 19 February 2016 there were 12 residents remaining in homes affected by Four Seasons Health Care closures.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQO 9633/11-16, to detail the specialties for which the Board has requested that Health and Social Care Trusts produce elective improvement plans, including (i) when the specialties were identified; (ii) on what basis the specialties were identified, (iii) when the improvement plans were requested; and (iv) what action is being taken to address the delivery issues within these specialties.

(AQW 54408/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The specialties for which the Health and Social Care Board has requested elective improvement plans from one or more Trusts in 2015/16 are set out in the table below:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Elective Specialty | ■ Neurology |
| ■ Dermatology | ■ Ophthalmology |
| ■ ENT | ■ Oral Surgery |
| ■ Gastroenterology | ■ Orthopaedics |
| ■ General Medicine | ■ Plastic Surgery |
| ■ General Surgery | ■ Rheumatology |
| ■ Gynaecology | ■ Thoracic Medicine |
| ■ Immunology | ■ Urology |

During April 2015, the Board required Trusts to produce elective improvement plans for a number of specialties where there had been a material underdelivery of commissioned volumes of core capacity during 2014/15.

Initially Trusts were asked to produce plans setting out on a weekly basis the level of improvement that would be delivered during the first half of 2015/16. The delivery of core position for the first six months of 2015/16 was reviewed at the start of October 2015 and for specialties where there had been a continued underdelivery of core, improvement plans were sought for the second half of 2015/16.

The Board monitors delivery of core and also performance against elective improvement plans at the regular elective performance meetings with Trusts to ensure that progress is being made to deliver the agreed outcomes or, where this

is not the case, to agree what remedial actions the Trust plans to take. Where monitoring identifies concern about Trusts' performance or highlights a serious risk to achievement of agreed outcomes, a range of escalation measures are in place that can be applied including more intense monitoring and more frequent review meetings with Trust Chief Executives and their senior teams until performance improves.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the strategic approach his Department is taking to meet future demand for nurses; and (ii) whether this planning includes nurses in both the statutory and independent sectors.

(AQW 54410/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Plan has been completed by my Department and is currently being considered by officials. It makes a series of recommendations including the need for a strategic approach to the future supply and demand of nursing and to making the Health and Social Care sector in Northern Ireland an "Employer of Choice". The Plan also recommends that further examination is undertaken of the nursing workforce in the independent sector as it has proven difficult to collate figures. The Health and Social Care Board is currently in the process of carrying out this further work.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the review of the Families Matter Strategy.
(AQW 54431/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I refer the member to my responses to AQW 50734/11-16 and AQW 52037/11-16.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to establish the underlying reasons for the significant disparity in Local Government Districts on the number of registered deaths due to lung cancer per 1,000 population.

(AQW 54434/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The variation in death rates due to lung cancer by District Council reflects incidence rates. Incidence rates in turn mirror the level of underlying risk factors especially tobacco use. Tobacco use and lung cancer incidence is highest in the more deprived groups of our population and this link to deprivation explains much of the geographical pattern that we see in Northern Ireland.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether a residential dementia care home tariff is required in addition to residential and nursing care home tariffs.

(AQW 54439/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) negotiates on an annual basis a regional tariff rate with the independent sector for residential and nursing home care. The regional tariff rate is a guide to what the Health and Social Care (HSC) considers to be fair and affordable, not a fixed price for care placement.

My Department has no role in establishing the rates paid for care; this is a matter for the HSCB. As the chief commissioner of care, the HSCB must assure itself that the rates paid represent the best possible outcome within the resources available to it in terms of procuring quality care at a sustainable price which represents value for money.

The HSCB are in negotiations with the independent sector regarding the new tariff rates for 2016/17. The new rates, to be announced in due course, will take account of a range of pressures facing the care sector including the forthcoming increase to the national minimum wage.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to extend the availability of the Meningitis B vaccine to older children.

(AQW 54446/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies.

The eligibility age for the Meningitis B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunisation programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the legislation banning the sale of cigarettes using vending machines.

(AQW 54447/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: District Councils are responsible for enforcing the vending machine legislation and compliance remains high, with no recorded breaches of the ban since its introduction in March 2012.

Banning sales of tobacco from vending machines is only one of a range of measures aimed at reducing smoking uptake by children and young people. While the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Surveys 2010 and 2013 show a reduction in smoking prevalence amongst 11-16 year olds from 8% in 2010 to 5% in 2013, it is not possible to disaggregate any specific impact of this legislation from other tobacco control interventions.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of times Ballycastle Fire Station was in breach of its Gartan availability target times in January 2016.

(AQW 54457/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of identified breaches of Retained Duty System availability targets at Ballycastle Station during January 2016 is set out in the table below.

	No of breaches
1st appliance	0
2nd appliance	10

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's policy on vaccinating children against Meningitis B.

(AQW 54460/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies. The eligibility age for the Meningitis B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunisation programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many children have been vaccinated against Meningitis B since the vaccination scheme began in October 2015; (ii) how many children are expected to be vaccinated against Meningitis B in the next 12 months; and (iii) what additional measures are being taken to encourage parents to ensure that their children are vaccinated.

(AQW 54461/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following a recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the Men B vaccination programme was introduced in September 2015. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. JCVI also recommended a limited catch-up programme for those infants aged 3 and 4 months in September 2015.

It is too early for any validated uptake data, but the early preliminary data suggests, for the first cohort of infants, an uptake rate of approximately 96% for their first dose of Men B vaccine. Published uptake figures will be available in the latter part of 2016.

I do not therefore have the figures of the number of children vaccinated with the Men B vaccine but around 19,800 children will have been eligible to receive the vaccine up to the end of February 2016. Over any 12 month period around 25,000 children will be eligible to receive the vaccine.

Based on feedback from the Public Health Agency implementation of the programme has gone very well to date but the PHA will continue to monitor the programme and take appropriate action if the uptake rate starts to go down.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to re-evaluate the vaccination programme in order to vaccinate all children, at least up to the age of 11 against Meningitis B and other meningococcal infections.

(AQW 54462/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies. The eligibility age for the Meningitis B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunisation programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI when considering the vaccination policy for Northern Ireland.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children that have (a) been diagnosed with Meningitis B; and (b) died as a result of Meningitis B in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54463/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) The number of laboratory confirmed cases of Sero Group B Invasive Meningococcal Disease (Meningitis B) cases reported for those aged 16 and under, can be found in the table below, for each of the last five years:

Financial Year (April – March)	Number of Laboratory Confirmed Meningitis B Cases
2010/11	28
2011/12	21
2012/13	27
2013/14	20
2014/15	17

Source: Public Health Agency (PHA)

- (b) During the last five years, the number of those aged 16 and under that died from Meningitis B, is detailed in the table below 1:

Financial Year (April – March)	Number of Deaths 2 from Meningitis B of those aged 16 and under
2010/11	2
2011/12	1
2012/13	1
2013/14	0
2014/15	0

Source: Public Health Agency (PHA)

- 1 There is no statutory obligation to inform the PHA of a death from Meningitis B. Whilst every effort is made to ascertain this information it cannot be guaranteed to be complete.
- 2 Meningitis B may have been a contributory factor and the PHA have been notified.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQW 54465/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Construction work for the new Radiotherapy Centre continues on site with anticipated building completion in Summer 2016. This will be followed by detailed client commissioning and training of staff to ensure the building is operational from Autumn 2016.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number of anti-depressant prescriptions written annually; (ii) cost of anti-depressant prescriptions; and (iii) number of GP referrals for mental health therapy, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54466/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number and cost of anti-depressant prescriptions written annually is not known, but the number and cost of anti-depressant items dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment is recorded. The number and gross ingredient cost of anti-depressant items dispensed annually, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years, are shown in Tables 1 and 2 overleaf. Some items and costs cannot be assigned to a Trust, due to missing patient details.

The number of GP referrals for mental health therapy is not collected centrally and is therefore not available.

Table 1: The number of anti-depressant¹ items dispensed, 2010/11 – 2014/15

Trust ²	Number of items				
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Belfast	387,870	423,293	442,867	480,697	499,082

Trust ²	Number of items				
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Northern	402,164	452,661	483,992	522,869	551,601
South Eastern	299,955	331,925	347,852	388,512	410,266
Southern	335,200	370,508	400,115	441,131	463,969
Western	305,096	335,993	354,653	389,968	403,808
Not available ³	244,431	259,844	294,844	261,217	327,329
Northern Ireland	1,974,716	2,174,224	2,324,323	2,484,394	2,656,055

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

Table 2: Gross Ingredient Cost (millions of pounds) of anti-depressant¹ items dispensed, 2010/11 – 2014/15

Trust ²	Gross Ingredient Cost (millions of pounds)				
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Belfast	3.54	2.97	2.27	2.70	2.43
Northern	4.35	3.97	3.13	3.63	3.06
South Eastern	2.89	2.64	2.02	2.41	2.22
Southern	3.42	3.15	2.33	2.74	2.48
Western	2.70	2.04	1.67	2.15	1.83
Not available ³	2.28	1.93	1.67	1.61	1.78
Northern Ireland	19.17	16.71	13.10	15.24	13.79

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO

- 1 Anti-depressant items are those listed under Chapter 4 Section 3 of the BNF
- 2 Trust has been defined as the Trust in which a patient lives, based on their postcode
- 3 Some items and costs cannot be assigned to a Trust, due to missing patient details or exclusions

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting lists for all Allied Health Professionals broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 54467/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Tables 1 to 15 detail the waiting lists for all Allied Health Professions (AHP) by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts at the end of January in each of the last three years.

Table 1 – AHP waiting lists at 27 January 2014 in the Belfast HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	186	121	152	69	122	650
Occupational Therapy	660	280	495	365	49	1,849
Physiotherapy	1,584	770	906	504	122	3,886
SALT	307	118	105	8	1	539
Podiatry	470	164	87	7	0	728
Orthoptics	47	32	28	6	1	114

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 2 – AHP waiting lists at 27 January 2014 in the Northern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	561	244	140	13	11	969
Occupational Therapy	732	332	418	442	829	2,753
Physiotherapy	1,719	972	1,135	575	163	4,564
SALT	240	128	140	53	55	616
Podiatry	396	222	171	17	1	807
Orthoptics	233	149	155	3	0	540

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 3 – AHP waiting lists at 27 January 2014 in the South Eastern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	257	137	95	27	10	526
Occupational Therapy	480	178	241	55	0	954
Physiotherapy	1,682	773	530	22	0	3,007
SALT	226	84	32	0	0	342
Podiatry	383	157	66	5	0	611
Orthoptics	96	37	22	7	1	163

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 4 – AHP waiting lists at 27 January 2014 in the Southern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	313	181	122	61	25	702
Occupational Therapy	391	172	136	53	126	878
Physiotherapy	1,505	603	861	838	608	4,415
SALT	197	106	125	44	115	587
Podiatry	429	200	277	154	3	1,063
Orthoptics	162	111	201	30	0	504

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 5 – AHP waiting lists at 27 January 2014 in the Western HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	253	105	132	46	7	543
Occupational Therapy	390	180	335	401	404	1,710
Physiotherapy	1,010	615	632	71	26	2,354
SALT	177	93	79	11	5	365
Podiatry	243	124	102	2	7	478
Orthoptics	134	41	14	1	0	190

Source: Health and Social Care Board
SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 6 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2015 in the Belfast HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	243	133	175	166	135	852
Occupational Therapy	583	287	323	485	386	2,064
Physiotherapy						
SALT	292	126	228	216	93	955
Podiatry	427	125	58	31	6	647
Orthoptics	99	40	41	7	6	193

Source: Health and Social Care Board
SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

The Belfast HSC Trust was unable to supply waiting times for physiotherapy

Table 7 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2015 in the Northern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	539	298	216	52	26	1,131
Occupational Therapy	600	229	327	454	1,275	2,885
Physiotherapy	1,733	859	1,046	1,397	2,271	7,306
SALT	277	77	138	76	61	629
Podiatry	598	179	126	0	0	903
Orthoptics	208	58	14	0	0	280

Source: Health and Social Care Board
SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 8 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2015 in the South Eastern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	263	128	121	86	185	783
Occupational Therapy	412	197	196	124	40	969
Physiotherapy	1,758	800	537	105	6	3,206
SALT	231	88	85	20	0	424
Podiatry	406	218	198	65	2	889
Orthoptics	82	28	40	0	0	150

Source: Health and Social Care Board
SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 9 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2015 in the Southern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	318	121	133	49	261	882
Occupational Therapy	433	150	212	182	202	1,179
Physiotherapy	1,579	745	861	498	39	3,722

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
SALT	167	109	146	277	451	1,150
Podiatry	434	221	295	408	507	1,865
Orthoptics	118	55	70	0	1	244

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 10 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2015 in the Western HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	397	161	174	130	228	1,090
Occupational Therapy	387	177	268	326	1,304	2,462
Physiotherapy	978	587	697	467	37	2,766
SALT	152	113	157	197	301	920
Podiatry	346	161	200	68	18	793
Orthoptics	99	49	33	1	0	182

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 11 – AHP waiting lists at 31 December 2015 in the Belfast HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	179	215	209	173	232	1,008
Occupational Therapy	310	320	290	412	599	1,931
Physiotherapy						
SALT	180	265	275	272	519	1,511
Podiatry	340	336	105	61	25	867
Orthoptics	53	68	33	37	60	251

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

The Belfast HSC Trust was unable to supply waiting times for physiotherapy; The Belfast HSC Trust is currently reporting figures a month in arrears

Table 12 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2016 in the Northern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	545	296	268	127	0	1,236
Occupational Therapy	678	281	348	335	606	2,248
Physiotherapy	1,281	832	1,017	1,327	5,919	10,376
SALT	242	193	183	175	292	1,085
Podiatry	504	113	67	8	0	692
Orthoptics	201	21	5	1	0	228

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 13 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2016 in the South Eastern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	289	141	190	177	210	1,007
Occupational Therapy	430	189	201	205	41	1,066
Physiotherapy	1,753	834	844	410	63	3,904
SALT	221	118	165	149	11	664
Podiatry	415	162	248	100	7	932
Orthoptics	93	53	46	24	0	216

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 14 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2016 in the Southern HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	344	179	194	152	104	973
Occupational Therapy	366	126	207	219	394	1,312
Physiotherapy	1,517	730	947	1,128	1,172	5,494
SALT	198	121	186	250	662	1,417
Podiatry	373	172	273	369	1,516	2,703
Orthoptics	171	97	107	159	11	545

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Table 15 – AHP waiting lists at 31 January 2016 in the Western HSC Trust

Profession	Waiting Time (weeks)					Total
	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 13	>13	
Dietetics	354	172	143	140	109	918
Occupational Therapy	386	218	251	350	1,756	2,961
Physiotherapy	1,160	653	762	303	1	2,879
SALT	201	101	196	186	371	1,055
Podiatry	275	159	201	220	1,035	1,890
Orthoptics	151	34	22	0	2	209

Source: Health and Social Care Board

SALT – Speech and Language Therapy

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting lists for MS patients broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54468/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of people waiting to receive drug treatment for Multiple Sclerosis at the end of January in the last three years is shown in the following table. This data is broken down by Trust of Residence.

Table 1: Number of patients waiting to receive drug treatment for Multiple Sclerosis at 31st January in each of the last three years.

HSC Trust of Residence	No. of patients waiting to receive Multiple Sclerosis drug treatment		
	31st January 2014	31st January 2015	31st January 2016
Belfast	9	3	11
Northern	9	6	12
South Eastern	7	2	9
Southern	7	2	6
Western	9	11	7
Northern Ireland	41	24	45

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people with Multiple Sclerosis that have waited longer than 18 weeks for a first appointment with a neurologist in the (i) Northern; and (ii) Western Health and Social Care Trusts, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54479/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Reason for referral, or confirmed diagnosis, is not collected for patients waiting for a first consultant-led appointment. Therefore it is not possible to separately identify patients with Multiple Sclerosis waiting for a first appointment with a consultant neurologist.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Neurologists currently in post in each Health and Social Care Trust; and changes to the (i) the number of patients with Multiple Sclerosis; and (ii) the number of Neurologists in post in the (a) Northern; and (b) Western Health and Social Care Trusts, in the last 5 years.

(AQW 54480/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The headcount and whole-time equivalent number (WTE) of neurologists currently in post in each HSC Trust is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	12	10.76
Northern*	1	1.0
South Eastern	2	1.7
Southern	2	2.0
Western	3	2.95

* Neurology services are also provided to the Northern Trust through an Out Reach Service supplied by Belfast Trust consultants.

i) Information on the number of people diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in each Health and Social Care Trust is not available. Information, however, is available on the number of people receiving drug treatment for Multiple Sclerosis at the end of the month.

The number of people receiving drug treatment for Multiple Sclerosis (including those patients on suspension of treatment) at the end of January in each of the last four years, the longest period for which information is readily available, is shown in the table below. This data is broken down by Trust of Residence.

Number of patients on drug treatment for Multiple Sclerosis at 31st January in each of the last 4 years

HSC Trust of Residence	No. of patients on Multiple Sclerosis drug treatment			
	31st January 2013	31st January 2014	31st January 2015	31st January 2016
Belfast	222	246	265	328
Northern	402	421	449	504
South Eastern	311	328	362	426
Southern	265	274	297	346

HSC Trust of Residence	No. of patients on Multiple Sclerosis drug treatment			
	31st January 2013	31st January 2014	31st January 2015	31st January 2016
Western	225	244	278	315
Northern Ireland	1,425	1,513	1,651	1,919

- ii) The headcount and whole-time equivalent number of neurologists employed by the Northern and Western Trusts at February in each of the preceding four years is shown in the table below.

Year	Northern HSCT*		Western HSCT	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
2014	1	1.0	2	2.0
2013	1	1.0	2	2.0
2012	1	1.0	2	2.0
2011	1	1.0	2	2.0

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total number and percentage of patients that were waiting (i) less than 9 weeks; (ii) more than 18 weeks; and (iii) more than 52 weeks for their first outpatient appointment in the South West Acute Hospital, in December 2015.

(AQW 54481/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number and percentage of patients that were waiting less than 9 weeks; more than 18 weeks; and more than 52 weeks for their first outpatient appointment in the South West Acute Hospital, at 31st December 2015 is shown in the table below.

	Number waiting for a first outpatient appointment	Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment
Less than 9 weeks	1,650	38%
More than 18 weeks	1,787	41%
More than 52 weeks	241	6%

Source: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much each Health and Social Care Trust have spent on subsidising meals for staff, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54487/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Health and Social Care Trusts do not subsidise meals for staff.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current legislation that allows patients to have full access to their medical notes.

(AQW 54488/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Patients have the right to access their medical notes under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) legal requirements that determine the length of time patients medical records must be kept; and (ii) cost of retaining records to the Health Service.

(AQW 54489/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Good Management Good Records, the Disposal Schedule approved by the NI Assembly for the Department and its Arms Length Bodies, details the length of time patient's medical records must be kept. The cost of retaining records for the Health Service is spread across all of the HSC public bodies and many private businesses such as GP practices. The costs of retaining these records are managed by each organisation independently. The Department does not hold an overall figure for the cost of retaining records to the Health Service.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of the Ards Hospital site is not used.

(AQW 54490/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All buildings on the Ards site are either in use or designated for imminent use.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the Western Health and Social Care Trust spent on agency staff in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 54491/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each Health and Social Care Trust, for the 2014/15 financial year.

TRUST	2014/2015
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	£27.0m
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	£7.8m
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	£9.7m
Western Health and Social Care Trust	£15.7m

Source: HSCTs

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any plans or proposals his Department has to invest in local outpatient neurology services.

(AQW 54497/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care (HSC) Board is working with a Neurology Modernisation Steering Group, involving the Public Health Agency, HSC Trusts, senior clinicians and the chair of the Service User Reference Group, to develop actions to make more effective use of the resources already invested and ensure that any future investment is cost-effective. In the past year: the Western and Belfast Trusts have each appointed an additional Consultant; a further Consultant post is funded for the Northern Trust but remains vacant as recruitment has proved unsuccessful to date; and, an additional Nurse Specialist is also funded in the Western Trust and is being recruited at present.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether contracts for occupational therapy equipment for patients are reviewed regularly to ensure best value is being obtained.

(AQW 54501/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Contracts for occupational therapy equipment for patients are reviewed regularly and are subject to a public tender as required.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the importance of prioritising a Walking Strategy in the next Programme for Government, to achieve the considerable health benefits that could be realised through a dedicated focus on walking.

(AQW 54506/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Physical activity is an important element in improving an individual's general health and wellbeing and promoting a healthy weight. Programmes to encourage people to participate in physical activity, including walking for health programmes, are a key part of my Department's obesity prevention strategy, are a key part of my Department's obesity prevention strategy – A Fitter Future for All – which was recently reviewed to take account of current research and guidance.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken to improve ambulance cover in South Armagh.

(AQW 54512/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) provides a regional service and will despatch the nearest and most appropriate vehicle to respond to 999 calls. The current position is that NIAS operates a deployment point in Crossmaglen and the South Armagh area is serviced by ambulance resources from Newry, Kilkeel and Armagh Ambulance Stations. There is also a Community First Responder Scheme in operation in Crossmaglen. The Health and Social Care Board and NIAS have been working to improve ambulance response times. Additional funding of £775,000 has been allocated in 2015/16 and £1,077,000 recurrently from 2016/17 to NIAS to manage the increasing demand due to demographic growth. This funding is to improve performance in the Northern, Southern and South Eastern Local Commissioning Group areas and will deliver an additional 15,000 emergency response production hours across the three areas annually.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to ensure people with hepatitis C have prompt access to treatment.

(AQW 54515/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Over the past 18 months, a range of new therapies for the treatment of patients with Hepatitis C have been approved by NICE and made available locally for NI patients. The HSC Board and Public Health Agency work closely with clinicians to identify the ongoing requirements for treating the number of new patients expected to present each year. My

Department has invested £1.3m non-recurrently in this specialty, over and above the recurrent funding, during 2015/16 to provide the new treatments for existing patients within the available capacity.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support his Department offers to Health and Social Care Trusts to assist them in making new hepatitis C treatments widely available.

(AQW 54516/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Over the past 18 months, a range of new therapies for the treatment of patients with Hepatitis C have been approved by NICE and made available locally for NI patients. The HSC Board and Public Health Agency work closely with clinicians to identify the ongoing requirements for treating the number of new patients expected to present each year. My Department has invested £1.3m non-recurrently in this specialty, over and above the recurrent funding, during 2015/16 to provide the new treatments for existing patients within the available capacity.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why patients diagnosed with sleep apnoea and that need a replacement Mandibular Advancement Device must now secure a referral from a GP to a respiratory consultant, given replacement devices were previously provided without the need for a referral appointment on each occasion the device required replacing.

(AQW 54525/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Patients who are already known to a respiratory team and are currently on a mandibular advancement device do not require re-referral from their GP to specialist services on each occasion that the device requires replacing.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the annual rate of retirement for local GPs; and for his assessment of whether the increase in GP training places is sufficient to mitigate this rate.

(AQW 54528/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The annual rate of retirement for local GPs is not available. In 2014 24.8% of GPs in Northern Ireland were aged over 55.

The additional 20 annual GP training places is only one of a range of initiatives which I have recently announced and which I consider will ease the work pressures on GPs and thereby encourage individuals to continue to work in Primary Care. These include a five-year investment initiative that will put close to 300 pharmacists in GP practices by 2021; and funding of £300,000 during 2015/16 to help retain the existing GP workforce and to encourage GPs who have left practice to return. I have also established a Departmental working group to consider the delivery of GP-led Primary Care services.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the number of locum GPs; and (ii) the current demand for locums in Northern Ireland; and (ii) to detail how his Department is addressing the current barriers facing GP practices that require locum Doctors to help manage their workload, yet have been unable to meet this requirement because of a shortage of locums.

(AQW 54529/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There are 429 locum GPs registered on the Primary Medical Services Performers List.

GP practices, as independent contractors, are responsible for engaging locums as required. My Department does not therefore hold information on current demand. However I am aware of difficulties being experienced by practices in securing locum cover, and a number of actions have been taken to try to address these challenges. I recently announced an investment of £1.2m per year to create an additional 20 GP training places. This is the largest investment in GP training for more than ten years and will increase the number of GP trainees to 85 per year from August 2016. In addition, as part of an investment package of up to £5.1m agreed for General Medical Services in 2015/16, new schemes have been introduced aimed at encouraging GPs who have left practice in Northern Ireland to return and supporting the existing GP workforce to remain in practice.

As well as growing the GP workforce, steps have also been taken to address the workload pressures on GPs and build the general practice team. For example, in December last year I announced a five year initiative which will see investment of £2.55m in 2016/17, rising to £14m per year in 2020/21, to provide close to 300 pharmacists to work alongside GPs in practices. I have also provided funding of £190,000 in 2015/16 to support GP practices working together as Federations to improve the resilience of GP-led services.

To ensure that people in Northern Ireland can continue to access high quality GP-led care, I have established a working group to consider the actions needed to safeguard the sustainability of GP services into the future. I expect to receive the working group's report shortly and will give careful consideration to its findings and recommendations.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of local GP practices that currently have GP vacancies waiting to be filled, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54530/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of vacant GP posts is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the Health and Social Care Board to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for identifying and recruiting the number of GPs and other staff required to deliver those services.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the review of Multiple Sclerosis Neurological Services.

(AQW 54531/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency are currently conducting an assessment of developments to improve services for people with Multiple Sclerosis. This work is on-going and will help inform service commissioning decisions for 2016/17 and beyond.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of directors in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54534/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

	Trust Directors	Trust Board Non-Executive Directors
Belfast HSC Trust	10	6
Northern HSC Trust	6	4 (plus 3 vacancies)
South Eastern HSC Trust	8	6
Southern HSC Trust	8	7

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of directors in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54535/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

	Trust Directors	Trust Board Non-Executive Directors
Belfast HSC Trust	10	6
Northern HSC Trust	6	4 (plus 3 vacancies)
South Eastern HSC Trust	8	6
Southern HSC Trust	8	7

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of directors in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54536/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

	Trust Directors	Trust Board Non-Executive Directors
Belfast HSC Trust	10	6
Northern HSC Trust	6	4 (plus 3 vacancies)
South Eastern HSC Trust	8	6
Southern HSC Trust	8	7

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of directors in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54537/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

	Trust Directors	Trust Board Non-Executive Directors
Belfast HSC Trust	10	6
Northern HSC Trust	6	4 (plus 3 vacancies)
South Eastern HSC Trust	8	6
Southern HSC Trust	8	7

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number and percentage of patients that waited (i) less than 9 weeks; (ii) more than 18 weeks; and (iii) more than 52 weeks for a first outpatient appointment in the South West Acute Hospital in (a) 2015; and (b) 2014.

(AQW 54542/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Outpatient waiting times information relates to how long patients are currently waiting for a first outpatient appointment, not the length of time they waited before attending their first appointment.

Data on the total length of time patients waited before attending a first outpatient appointment is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number and percentage of patients that waited more than (i) 9 weeks; and (ii) 18 weeks for a diagnostic test in South West Acute Hospital in December 2015.

(AQW 54543/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At 31st December 2015, there were a total of 2,389 patients waiting for a diagnostic test in the South West Acute Hospital. There were 50 (2.1%) patients waiting longer than 9 weeks. Of these 50, less than 5 (<1%) were waiting longer than 18 weeks.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number and percentage of patients that waited (i) more than 9 weeks; and (ii) more than 18 weeks for a diagnostic test in South West Acute Hospital in (a) 2015; and (b) 2014.

(AQW 54544/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Diagnostic waiting times information relates to how long patients are currently waiting for a diagnostic test, not the length of time they waited before a diagnostic test was carried out.

Data on the total length of time patients waited before receiving a diagnostic test is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total number and percentage of patients that waited (i) less than 13 weeks; and (ii) more than 26 weeks for inpatient and daycare treatment in (a) 2015; and (b) 2014 in the South West Acute Hospital.

(AQW 54545/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Inpatient waiting times information relates to how long patients are currently waiting for inpatient admission, not the length of time they waited before admission, also known as completed waits.

Data on the total length of time patients waited before inpatient admission are not readily available.

Mr Patterson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number and percentage of patients that waited (i) less than 13 weeks; and (ii) more than 26 weeks for inpatient and daycare treatment in (a) 2015; and (b) 2014, in the South Tyrone Hospital

(AQW 54546/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Inpatient waiting times information relates to how long patients are currently waiting for inpatient admission, not the length of time they waited before admission, also known as completed waits.

Data on the total length of time patients waited before inpatient admission are not readily available.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the rationale for the decision to not offer Meningitis B vaccine to babies born before 1 September 2015.

(AQW 54552/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and

recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies. The eligibility age for the Meningitis B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunisation programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

JCVI did recommend a catch-up for those babies aged 3 or 4 months in September 2015, therefore the vaccine has been offered to all babies born from 1 May 2015.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any issues exist in relation to a shortage of Meningitis B vaccine stocks.

(AQW 54553/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There is no problem with the supply of Men B vaccine for use in the national Men B vaccination programme, which is being offered to all infants at 2, 4 and 12 months of age.

I understand there may be a shortage of the Men B vaccine for use by private health care clinics. This is a matter for the vaccine manufacturer to resolve.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many serious adverse incidents have been investigated in each of the last 5 years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54560/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: During the period 1 January 2011 – 31 December 2015, the total number of Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) investigated was 1,932. A breakdown by Health & Social Care Trust is shown in the following table.

YEAR	BHSCT	NHSCT	NIAS	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
2011	34	32	1	32	37	21	157
2012	59	57	1	29	51	27	224
2013	54	40	5	44	39	22	204
2014	195	177	1	76	79	102	630
2015	169	186	3	106	154	99	717
Totals	511	492	11	287	360	271	1,932

The purpose of the SAI reporting system is to identify and promote learning from events. The investigation of an SAI provides a mechanism to effectively share learning in a meaningful way; with a focus on safety and quality; ultimately leading to service improvement for service users.

I consider full and frank reporting to be essential in helping drive improvements.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether it is normal practice for Health and Social Care Trusts to employ Locum Consultants through Medical Recruitment Agencies without first undertaking a job interview.

(AQW 54561/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Agencies are used where there are no other viable alternatives to providing urgent, short-term cover. On occasions where Health and Social Care Trusts engage Locum Consultants through Medical Recruitment Agencies the Trust is not the employer and therefore does not generally hold a recruitment interview with the Locum.

Health and Social Care Trusts require the Agency, as a condition within their contract, to manage completely all aspects of legislative and regulatory requirements relevant to employment of Agency workers and their assignment within the HSC. HSC Trusts ensure the Agency has undertaken these requirements before an Agency worker commences work.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have presented to Emergency Departments in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area with alcohol related illnesses in each month of the last three years.

(AQW 54563/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people presenting at emergency care departments due to alcohol related illnesses is not available.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to improve services for patients diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis given that 65 per cent of newly diagnosed patients are currently waiting longer than 18 weeks for a first appointment with a neurologist.

(AQW 54564/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: £40 million additional funding has been provided this year to provide additional outpatient clinics and treatments, for a wide range of specialities. This will allow between 60,000-70,000 additional assessments, operations / treatments to be progressed, including newly diagnosed patients currently waiting longer than 18 weeks for a first appointment with a neurologist.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following his announcement of an extra £2m for autism services, to detail how his Department will distribute both staff and funding to each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54578/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In the first instance the additional resource will be deployed to address waiting list pressures in the HSC Trusts until additional Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists are recruited. The outcome of the current HSC Board review of the model of Autism Services will be used to inform the eventual distribution of staff and funding to each HSC Trust.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any changes to the (i) staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service; (ii) ambulance fleet in the (a) Northern and (b) Western Health and Social Care Trusts in 2015-16; and to detail any plans or proposals for further increases.

(AQW 54589/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The table below indicates the changes in staffing levels in 2015/16:

WTE	Northern Division		Western Division	
	April 2015	February 2016	April 2015	February 2016
Ambulance Care Attendant (ACA) posts	63.5	62.5	48	47
ACAs in post	58.5	63	42	46
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) posts	75	75	67	66
EMTs in post	46	69	55	63
Paramedic posts	89	100	91	91
Paramedics in post	99	97	83	82
Supervisor posts	17	8	-	-
Supervisors in post	8	8	-	-

There have been no changes to the number of fleet vehicles, although a number of vehicles have been replaced. The table below shows the number of vehicles in each division:

	Northern Division	Western Division
A&E Ambulances	34	24
Rapid Response Vehicles	14	12
Patient Care Service Vehicles	30	24
Support Vehicles	-	3

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) plans to increase staffing levels in 2016/17 in the Northern Division through the additional funding allocated by my Department to manage increasing demand due to demographic growth. The number and location of the additional personnel is currently being considered by the NIAS.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how additional funding in 2016-17 for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service for will be spent.

(AQW 54590/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The financial planning process within my Department for 2016/17 is ongoing and decisions have not yet been taken on the budget position for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will investigate why (a) staff at the Rathmoyle Resource Centre, Ballycastle, have been instructed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Catering

Service that are no longer permitted to fork mash or puree any meals for any of the service users in the centre; and (b) the Northern Health and Social Care Trust did not consult with the families or guardians of the service users on this matter.

(AQW 54615/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following a review of the guidance set out in the Dysphagia Diet Food Texture Descriptors (2012), and recommendations recently received by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, a review was undertaken of the provision of food to clients who require a modified diet. In an effort to ensure that service users received a diet of the correct consistency, it was agreed that pre-prepared meals of texture modified foods were to be purchased for all clients that required a modified diet, according to their Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) assessment recommendations.

Rathmoyle Resource Centre has been purchasing modified textured diets from February 2015 and its staff have been told that they should not fork mash or puree meals provided in Rathmoyle for clients who have dysphagia. In instances however, where the pre-bought in meals are not acceptable to the service user, the Trust has agreed a risk managed process where centres can provide other foods, so long as these are prepared in line with the textures recommended by the Speech and Language Therapist.

Families/Carers/Guardians of affected service users were notified verbally in December 2015 when the directive came out, and written correspondence was forwarded on 25 January 2016. When assessment is completed by SLT, they will also discuss recommended textures in a SLT care plan with families and give them a written copy of this, along with a leaflet about the appropriate texture of food.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why the Meningitis B vaccine is not offered to all newborn babies; and whether he intends to review this policy.

(AQW 54620/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Men B vaccine is being offered to all babies. Since September 2015 the Meningitis B vaccine has been offered to all babies born from 1 May 2015 onwards.

In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies.

The eligibility age for the Men B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunization programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI when considering the vaccination policy for Northern Ireland.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether the proposed closure of the Gortin Owencliew day care services for older people will have a detrimental impact on the local community; and whether this decision meets rural proofing obligations.

(AQW 54622/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western HSC Trust's proposals on the reform of its day care services for older people, including its proposals for Gortin day care centre, have recently been considered by the Health and Social Care Board, and their advice has been forwarded to the Department for consideration. The Western HSC Trust undertook equality and human rights screening on its reform proposals as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the rural community.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on Dromore day care services for older people.

(AQW 54623/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western HSC Trust's proposals on the reform of its day care services for older people have recently been considered by the Health and Social Care Board, and their advice has been forwarded to the Department for consideration.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any plans to introduce a specialist nurse led Emergency Nurse Practitioner clinic at the new Ballymena Health and Care Centre.

(AQW 54630/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: An Emergency Nurse Practitioner is an experienced emergency nurse who has undertaken a specific course of study and acquired enhanced knowledge and skills in the field of emergency care.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust have advised that the Emergency Medicine Service has no plans to establish an Emergency Nurse Practitioner service in Ballymena Health and Care centre.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the pilot of community based age-related hearing services in conjunction with high street providers, to detail (i) when the pilot will launch; (ii) the geographic area the pilot will cover; and (iii) the mechanism for putting the pilot out to tender.

(AQW 54631/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not yet available as the Health and Social Care Board is currently finalising the commissioning specification for the market sounding exercise. Thereafter it will announce further details.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the pilot of community based age-related hearing services in conjunction with high street providers, to detail (i) what input stakeholders, including service users, older peoples' representatives and potential providers have had, or will have, in ensuring the pilot will be designed to fully meet the needs and preferences of service users; and (ii) how learning from similar experiences elsewhere will be taken into account.

(AQW 54632/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has taken account of the findings from two user surveys which were carried out in 2012 and 2014 in collaboration with Trusts and Action on Hearing Loss. The surveys of "User's Experience Following the Fitting of their First Hearing Aid" and of "Patient Experience up to Five Years Following the Fitting of a Hearing Aid" showed a high level of satisfaction with Audiology Services. The reports did however suggest further areas for improvement and HSC Trusts have worked to integrate these findings into their services.
- (ii) The HSCB has referenced the report on "Adult Hearing Loss 2015" and has discussed learning from the Any Qualified Provider (AQP) process with Clinical Commissioning Groups such as South Derbyshire to help inform the service design process.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much (a) drug addiction; and (b) alcohol related health issues have cost the Health Service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54648/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to provide the information for each of the last five years.

- (a) Research has shown that the total cost societal of drug misuse to England and Wales amounts £10.7 billion each year – over half this cost is in relation to acquisitive crime. If this is applied on a pro-rata basis to Northern Ireland, the cost of drug misuse could be in the region of £345 million, again half of this amount (£175 million) is related to acquisitive crime.
- (b) A report published by my Department in 2009 on the social costs of alcohol misuse in NI estimates the cost to the Health & Social Care Sector as approximately £250 million each year.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what day care programmes are available for people that are visually impaired, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54657/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is provided below:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Service users with a visual impairment can avail of Trust day care facilities.

In addition, the Sensory Support Team has contracts in place with the following agencies and groups to provide other day care activities for service users with a visual impairment.

- RNIB, to enable service users to access day care opportunities.
- SENSE, to facilitate 3 evening groups for visually impaired people.
- Visual Access NI, who provide information technology programmes. There is a strong element of social interaction and peer support involved to enable service users with a visual impairment to develop skills and knowledge of a range of assistive technology including speech and increased font programmes.
- Acorn Arts Group, which meets weekly to provide arts activities for service users with a visual impairment.
- Atlanta swimming club which meets weekly at Shankill leisure centre and provides swimming and social activities for service users with a visual impairment

Belfast Trust Sensory Support Team also supports a number of groups for visually impaired service users through minor grants, these include:

- Linenhall History Group which meet fortnightly in the Linenhall Library
- Dotty Bridge Club who meet weekly.
- St Katherine's Bowling Club who meet weekly.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

The South Eastern Trust provides physical disability day care services which provide placements for people who are visually impaired. The focus is on supporting individuals to access opportunities in their own communities to maximise their independence.

In addition, further support services to people with visual impairment are provided such as:

- A Wider Vision Group in the North Down area which provides a monthly club for people who are visually impaired to promote socialisation, health development, support and friendship.
- A number of sporting outlets in conjunction with Leisure services to promote leisure and health development.
- Trust Health Development Services facilitate access to day opportunities such as walking groups, cook-it programmes, and sporting programmes.
- The Trust supports a number of local visually impaired groups to develop a calendar of events which promotes health and well being, safety and security.
- The Trust has partnered with voluntary organisations to provide opportunities for rehabilitation classes and programmes to promote greater independence.

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Individuals with visual impairments can attend Day Centres across the various programmes of care, Physical Disability, Learning Disability, Mental Health and Older People and Primary Care (OPPC)

Members of the Sensory Disability Team provide Visual Awareness Training on request and carry out access audits which have made recommendations to the Day Centres regarding visually impaired people accessing day care.

In addition to day care provision, the Trust ensures that individuals with a visual impairment have access to day time opportunities and programmes through our partnership working with RNIB. The Trust has a contract with RNIB; 3 staff are employed, a Community Access Worker and 2 Community Access Support Workers as part of the Sensory Disability Service.

The Trust supports the following groups and clubs for individuals who have a Visual Impairment. These various clubs/groups offer a number of different day time opportunities/programmes:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| ■ Lurgan Private Eye Club. | ■ Get Active Club Newry. |
| ■ Portadown Cane and Able Club. | ■ Newry Watch Club. |
| ■ Tandem Walking Group + for individuals living in Portadown, Lurgan, Craigavon, and Banbridge. | ■ Moy Gardening Group |
| ■ Banbridge VIP Club. | ■ Moy Craft Group |
| ■ Banbridge Luncheon Club. | ■ Orchard VIP Club - Armagh |
| ■ Newry VIP Club. | ■ Miegh VIP Club |
| | ■ Dungannon VIP Club |

These clubs/groups are supported by Community Access Support Workers (CASW). The CASW assist them in making applications to the Charity Commission for grants and funding. They also assist with finding volunteers for the clubs/Groups, providing Visual Awareness Training (VAT) to any new volunteers. The CASW would accompany clubs/groups on their annual days out as well as supporting them at social events.

The Community Access Worker (CAW) assists individuals with 'mainstream day time opportunities' i.e. when an individual with a visual impairment wishes to attend their local leisure centre, or a mainstream club/group that has not been set up for individuals with a visual impairment. The CAW provides Visual Awareness Training to these clubs/groups and ensures that any individual with a visual impairment is supported in joining them. The CAW supported 55 individuals last year (01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015) and has supported 55 so far this year (01/04/2015 to 24/02/2016) to access day opportunities.

The CAW works in partnership with a number of other organizations to support individuals to access their local community and engage in successful day time opportunities/programs i.e. the CAW works closely with both the Torch Trust who offer a befriending service, and the 'My Guide' service with Guide Dogs.

The Trust, working in partnership with the RNIB, offers confidence building programs i.e. Finding Your Feet – three day residential course for individuals who are newly diagnosed with a visual impairment. The Trust also offers the 'Cook it' programs facilitated by the Rehabilitation Worker for People with a Visual Disability, and I.T. training for individuals and groups.

The Trust runs a number of Fit 4 U programs in various locations for those with a visual impairment.

The SHSCT works in partnership Community Arts – Dungannon Council project for people with various disabilities. This programme has made a tactile map of Dungannon Park.

The Trust worked in partnership with Armagh Council during 2015 and the 'Sound Mapping Project Funded by Armagh City & District Council and McCann Trust, facilitated by the Rehabilitation Worker, created a sound and tactile map of Armagh. A number of visually impaired individuals assisted to identify 4 main routes around Armagh City, including tourist information, shopping, cafes and places of interest in Armagh which Visually Impaired people can now access safely.

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Clients with visual impairments can access a range of day care and day opportunity services as follows:

Day Care Services:-

There are a number of age related day care services provided directly by the Trust or provided by external providers commissioned by the Trust.

Self Directed Support:

Clients also can access day care / day opportunities via a self directed process –following assessment and meeting criteria for services they can be provided with funding to access their own choice of day care services / programme.

Day Opportunity Services:

Clients can also access a range of day opportunity services which are provided by the Trust and by external providers (commissioned and non-commissioned) to access education, training, employment, social and leisure activities. This model promotes social inclusion by supporting clients to access and participate within their local communities.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Within the Northern Trust area there is a group run in Gloucester Park day centre on a Tuesday afternoon. There are also other programmes held in the Trust day centres i.e. Health and Wellbeing, Steps, and Positive Living. The Northern Trust has a contract with the RNIB to provide other opportunities.

In Larne/Carrickfergus/Newtownabbey these opportunities are:

- Blinkers/Newtownabbey group meet once per month
- Swimming at Valley Leisure Centre weekly
- Carrickfergus VIP once a month

Opportunities in the Magherafelt/Cookstown area include:

- Insight group meets the first Monday of every month. Activities include speakers, meeting, 2 day trips per year, 2 social dinners per year
- Book club meets on the third Tuesday of every month in Cookstown library.
- Boccia and new age Kurling group – meets on the second Wednesday of every month in Cookstown Leisure Centre
- Walking group – runs for a six week period throughout the year

Opportunities in the Causeway and Glens area include:

- Ballymoney Vision Group – established as a support group for those living in the Ballymoney area and includes day outings, sports, talks and social activities
- Wednesday Triangle Club – For those living in the triangle area of Coleraine, Portstewart and Portrush. Includes reminiscence, talks, activities, outings and light refreshments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the support his Department is providing for people with alcohol addiction problems in North Down.

(AQW 54660/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, a full range of alcohol and drug education, early intervention, and treatment and support services are commissioned from a number of providers by the Public Health Agency in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area.

In addition, SEHSCT's Addictions Service provides a range of interventions for adults, aged 18 years and over, residing in the Trust area who are dependent on alcohol or/and other drugs. The service sits within the Mental Health programme of care and is multi-disciplinary in nature, comprising of doctors, nurses and social workers across a range of Tier 2, 3 and 4 services as follows:

- **Tier 2:** Alcohol Liaison Service for the Ulster, Down & Lagan Valley Hospitals and a Health Development Officer who provides education, prevention and training service.
- **Tier 3:** Core Community Alcohol/Drug Teams in Down, Lisburn, North Down and Ards, Dual Diagnosis Service, Benzodiazepine Service, Substitute Prescribing service.
- **Tier 4:** Inpatient treatment service offers a 4-week intensive group therapy programme in addition to briefer admissions for assessment, detoxification and stabilization according to individual need and is provided 7 days a week. Admission to the unit is usually planned and arranged through the Tier 3 Community Addictions Service.

SEHSCT also manages a Big Lottery- funded scheme, "Alcohol and You" via a contractual arrangement with ASCERT, FASA and Addiction NI, providing a range of advice, information, screening and brief interventions.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why babies born before April 2015 are not eligible to receive the meningitis vaccine, Bexsero.

(AQW 54663/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy is informed by the work of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee. In formulating its advice and recommendations the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies. The eligibility age for the Meningitis B vaccination programme is based on the recommendations from JCVI. The first dose of the vaccine is given at 2 months of age followed by further doses at 4 and 12 months of age. As the disease peaks around 5 months of age before declining, the priority of the Men B immunisation programme is to provide protection to the most vulnerable group before the peak in incidence of disease at 5 months of age.

JCVI did recommend a catch-up for those babies born from 1 May 2015 and were therefore aged 3 or 4 months in September 2015.

I will continue to be guided by the independent expert advice provided by JCVI.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether (i) he is aware of the current issues with stock of the meningitis vaccine Bexsero, resulting in the parents of babies born before April 2015 being unable to inoculate their children privately against meningitis; and (ii) these parents can avail of the vaccine via Health Service stock.

(AQW 54664/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I understand there is currently a shortage of the Men B vaccine for use as a private vaccination. This is a matter for the vaccine manufacturer to resolve.

There is no problem with the supply of Men B vaccine for use in the national Men B vaccination programme and Northern Ireland is receiving a proportionate amount of vaccine to enable the vaccination of all babies from 2 months of age as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Early preliminary data suggests, for the first cohort of infants, an uptake rate of approximately 96% for their first dose of Men B vaccine. Therefore in order to guarantee the supply of vaccine for use by those recommended by JCVI it is not possible to allow any of the vaccine to be used privately.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the commitment in the Bamford Review to complete and maintain a map of services across Northern Ireland.

(AQW 54665/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Bamford Action Plan contains two actions relating to the mapping of services across Northern Ireland.

Action 61: Provide information on children's, adolescent and adult mental health services for use by the public, GPs and other clinicians. This action is complete. Each Trust has established a CAMHS website, and a list of CAMHS services is available on the Family Support NI website. The Adult Mental Health Care Pathway was launched in October 2014 and is available on the HSCB website. A Regional Mental Health Service map went live in April 2015 and is available in the mental health section on NI Direct.

Action 51: Complete and maintain a map of learning disability services across Northern Ireland. Work has begun on gathering information regarding learning disability services to populate the Service Map for Learning Disability. The intention is, as with Mental Health, that the resultant Map of Learning Disability Services will be available on NI Direct.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety who will have responsibility for the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership in the new health structures,

(AQW 54666/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The consultation document "Health and Social Care reform and transformation - Getting the structures right" was published on 15 December 2015. The consultation to hear the public's views on these important issues ended on 12 February and the responses are currently being considered.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, further detailed work will take place on where functions would be most effectively located, including responsibility for the work of the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership.

A Programme Board has been established comprising of representatives from the Department, HSCB, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Trusts to oversee the implementation of any changes. It is proposed that key staff from the various HSC organisations will be involved in the work directed by that Board. The Programme Board will consider and address the practical implications of any changes including the movement of functions.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail when a decision will be made on whether Health and Social Care Board employees based in Gransha Park House, Londonderry will have to be relocated.

(AQW 54674/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. No decisions have yet been taken about the location of jobs in the future structure.

My Department will take account of the views of all relevant stakeholders and will be working closely with all HSC colleagues, including those in the HSCB, Trusts and Public Health Agency, in the coming months to define the best health and social care structures for Northern Ireland.

I realise that during this period of significant change staff will be concerned. It is not my Department's intention to cause unnecessary upheaval for staff impacted.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why breast reconstruction surgery following a mastectomy or a lumpectomy is classified as being an elective surgery.

(AQW 54679/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Elective inpatient admissions are defined as for those patients for whom the decision to admit has been pre-planned. Non-elective, including emergency admissions, is for those patients whose admission is unpredictable and at short notice because of clinical need. Admissions for breast reconstruction are pre-planned and therefore deemed to be elective surgery.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients that have (i) requested breast reconstruction surgery; and (ii) had breast reconstruction surgery carried out, following treatment for breast cancer, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54680/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The number of requests for breast reconstruction surgery is not collected by my Department; Reconstruction surgery is offered to all clinically suitable patients, there is no distinction between the numbers of patients requesting surgery and proceeding to have surgery.

The number of patients in Northern Ireland that had breast reconstruction surgery following treatment for breast cancer, by HSC Trust:

- (ii) 2010/11 to 2014/15

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Belfast HSC Trust	35	80	126	110	69
Northern HSC Trust	19	20	20	24	28
South Eastern HSC Trust	67	71	60	62	48
Southern HSC Trust	17	12	10	18	19
Western HSC Trust	19	17	16	7	6

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for breast reconstruction surgery (i) this year; and (ii) in each of the last five years.

(AQW 54681/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Immediate breast cancer reconstruction surgery is offered as part of a patient's initial treatment pathway and as such there is no waiting time for these procedures. On some occasions, through patient choice, breast reconstruction may be carried out post treatment, following completion of a patient's primary cancer surgery.

Therefore, consistent information on the average waiting time for breast reconstruction surgery this year; and in each of the last five years is not readily available.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) patients that are currently waiting for breast reconstruction surgery; and (ii) breast reconstruction surgeries that are expected to be carried out in the next twelve months.

(AQW 54682/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Information on the number of patients waiting for breast reconstruction surgery is shown in the following table. The Northern and Western Trusts were unable to provide this information.

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for breast reconstruction surgery at the end of February 2016, by Trust

HSC Trust	Number of patients waiting for breast reconstruction surgery at the end of February 2016
Belfast	61
Northern	16

HSC Trust	Number of patients waiting for breast reconstruction surgery at the end of February 2016
South Eastern ¹	206
Southern	3

Source: HSC Trusts

- 1 Information relates to the position at 31st January 2016 and includes only patients awaiting secondary breast reconstruction surgery.
- (ii) Information on the number of breast reconstruction surgeries that are expected to be carried out in the next twelve months is not readily available as this will be dependent on the number of patients diagnosed with cancer.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 54684/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, along with the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland, received approx £25m of funding through the EU cross-border Interreg IVA Programme 2007 – 2013 to support the 'Putting Patients, Clients and Families First' (PPF) project. This required match funding from both Departments, with DHSSPS providing £4.445m over the duration of the project.

PPF consisted of 12 sub-projects which were implemented across the border area, covering services such as eating disorders, alcohol management, autism and obesity. As part of the Diabetes sub-project, the HSCB commissioned regional services for pregnant women, and children and young people, based in the Royal Victoria Hospital. The overall cost of these services provided by the Belfast HSC Trust was £213,144.63. The European Commission reimbursed 75% of this cost, with the remaining 25% match funding being provided jointly by the DHSSPS and Department of Health in ROI.

More recently, the Interreg VA programme currently has €53m available for health projects across Northern Ireland. Final decisions on the allocation of funding to projects, including any required match funding from the Department, will be taken before the end summer 2016.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much of the additional £2m recently allocated for autism services will be spent in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54688/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In the first instance the additional resource will be deployed to address waiting list pressures in all the HSC Trusts until additional Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists are recruited.

The additional funding will also improve access to intervention and support services both before and following confirmation of a diagnosis of autism.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the completion date for the new Omagh Hospital; and whether work is progressing as planned.

(AQW 54690/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Construction of the new Omagh Hospital commenced in July 2014 and is expected to be completed in December 2016. This will be immediately followed by a commissioning period leading to an anticipated opening during the Spring of 2017.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department spent on a show room displaying how the new Omagh Hospital will look.

(AQW 54691/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In line with best practice, the competition process for the tender award for the construction of the Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex included the requirement for the successful contractor to construct two temporary patient areas known as "mock-up" rooms. The cost of the mock-up rooms was £85,800 with the loose free standing equipment being allocated on a loan and return basis from suppliers already on the Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) procurement contracts list. This represents 0.1% of the project value.

In Omagh, there are 90 consultation/examination rooms and 48 en-suite in-patient bedrooms. The mock-up review ensured that the layout and quality of furniture and equipment met back care, disability and health and safety requirements and enabled good access and free movement around the room for staff and patients. The review also ensured that the specialist advisor in infection prevention and control was satisfied with the finishes and fittings in terms of their risk assessments.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has carried out any research into the possible links between the use of synthetic sports pitches and certain cancers.

(AQW 54726/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has not carried out any research into possible links between the use of synthetic sports pitches and certain cancers.

On 18 February 2016, the Football Association issued a statement on the safety of artificial 3G pitches in the UK. The statement is available on-line at:

<http://www.thefa.com/news/thefa/2016/feb/statement-3g-pitches-180216#3FJgxBPbf7feA2IL.99>

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what assurances he can give that the services provided at Glenmona Resource Centre for vulnerable young people are continued and that the health and safety of those young people is assured.

(AQW 54727/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I can confirm that negotiations between the HSC Board and the Glenmona Trustees, and their Board of Management are continuing in order to secure a resolution. My officials are also involved in the process of negotiation with relevant parties.

My main concern will be to minimise the disruption to the young people who currently receive services on the Glenmona site.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on negotiations between the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Health and Social Care Board and the Board of Governors of Glenmona Resource Centre, Glen Road, West Belfast to ensure that the facility on that site is not terminated.

(AQW 54728/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I can confirm that negotiations between the HSC Board and the Glenmona Trustees, and their Board of Management are continuing in order to secure a resolution. My officials are also involved in the process of negotiation with relevant parties.

My main concern will be to minimise the disruption to the young people who currently receive services on the Glenmona site.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the change in the number of people in receipt of domiciliary care services between 2011 and 2015.

(AQW 54729/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on domiciliary care has been published annually in the statistical bulletin "Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland" since 2008. These can be found online at the following web address: <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/domiciliary-care>

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has commissioned any research into the reasons for the significant increase in the number of day case admissions for those with pain management issues over the last ten years.

(AQW 54731/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of day case admissions for people with pain management has remained relatively static over the past five years at an average of 5,400 patients. Data recorded prior to 2011/12 it is not considered sufficiently complete or robust to be relied upon.

While no specific research has been commissioned by my Department there is a general opinion that the number of people suffering from persistent or chronic pain is growing due to an increasing and ageing population and, within this, an increase of many other painful long term conditions such as osteoarthritis due to obesity and diabetic neuropathy.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why items for patients suffering from lymphoedema, including compression bras and vests, are no longer available on prescription.

(AQW 54793/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Compression bras and vests have never been available to lymphoedema patients on prescription. These items are funded by Health and Social Care Trusts.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to address patient waiting lists.

(AQW 54807/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Improving waiting times continues to be one of my key priorities and the vast majority of the additional resources made available by the Executive are going directly towards tackling waiting times.

The further allocation of £30 million I recently announced follows the Executive's earlier allocation of £40 million. The combined £70 million will ensure in the region of 150,000 extra assessments, tests and procedures are delivered. Also many children awaiting assessment for autism will benefit from the £2 million I recently allocated for this specific area.

Most people will be seen during January to March of this year so the full extent will not be clear until early 2016/17 however we are now seeing real reductions in the number of people waiting for assessment or treatment.

Provisional figures for February 2016 show that those waiting more than 18 weeks for a first outpatient appointment have fallen by 9% and those waiting longer than 26 weeks for an inpatient day case has fallen by nearly 13%. It is clear that the investments we are directing towards waiting lists are making a difference. But it will take time and significant non recurrent and recurrent investment to bring waiting lists back to an acceptable level while simultaneously increasing capacity to meet demand. My commitment to an additional £30 million is an important step to ensuring continued progress.

For the longer term, the Health and Social Care Board has developed a plan to arrest the decline in elective waiting times and deliver sustainable improvements, which my officials are currently considering.

I have also appointed an expert panel to lead the debate on the optimal configuration of Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland. This will be a clinically led process to advise us what services the people of Northern Ireland should expect from their Health and Social Care system.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the extra £2m allocated for autism services will be spent.

(AQW 54816/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In the first instance the additional resource will be deployed to address waiting list pressures in the HSC Trusts until additional Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Primary Mental Health and Family Intervention Therapists are recruited.

The additional funding will also improve access to intervention and support services both before and following confirmation of a diagnosis of autism.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of patients diagnosed with cancer; and (ii) the type of cancer, broken down by electoral ward in West Tyrone.

(AQW 54823/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information provided by the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) states:

- (i) Between 2009 and 2013, there was an average of 564 cases of cancer (including non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC)) diagnosed each year in the West Tyrone Assembly Area. Figures broken down by electoral ward are set out in Table 1.
- (ii) Due to small numbers, it is not possible to provide a breakdown for cancer type at electoral ward level. In the West Tyrone Assembly Area, the most commonly diagnosed cancer type was NMSC (158 cases). Other common cancer diagnoses included colorectal (63 cases), prostate (55 cases), breast (51 cases) and lung (42 cases). A breakdown of cancer type in the West Tyrone Assembly Area is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Average Number of Cases of Cancer Diagnosed in West Tyrone by Electoral Ward (2009-2013).

Electoral Ward	Average number of cases
Strule	27
Dergmoney	25
Strabane West	25
Camowen	24
Strabane North	24
Ballycolman	23
Glenderg	23
Dunnamanagh	22
Sion Mills	22
Castlederg	21
Finn	21
Glenelly Valley	21
Newtownstewart	21
Coolnagard	20

Electoral Ward	Average number of cases
Fintona	19
Beragh	18
Fairy Water	18
Gortrush	18
Gortin	17
Trillick	17
Drumquin	16
Killyclogher	16
Sixmilecross	16
Artigarvan	15
Drumnakilly	15
Owenkillew	14
Dromore	13
Newtownsaville	12
Termon	12
Slievekirk	8

Source: Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR)

Table 2: Average Number of Cases of Cancer Diagnosed in West Tyrone by Cancer Type (2009-2013).

Cancer type	Average number of cases
Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer	158
Colorectal	63
Prostate	55
Breast	51
Lung	42
Lymphoma	18
Kidney	15
Brain	14
Head & Neck	14
Melanoma	13
Uterus	12
Leukaemia	10
Stomach	10
Oesophagus	9
Pancreas	9
Bladder	8
Myeloma	6
Ovarian	6
Liver	5
Cervix	4
Testicular	2
Other	40

Source: Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR)

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered appointing a local mental health commissioner.

(AQW 54861/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Mental health services in Northern Ireland are commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency to meet the needs of the population of Northern Ireland, in line with the Bamford Action Plan. There are no plans to appoint a local mental health commissioner.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he intends to address the cost of locums and agency staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 54865/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST) is mindful of the reducing supply and availability of the health and social care workforce throughout the UK and the cost of locums and agency workers needed to reduce the gaps in key services. Trust expenditure on agency staff has been incurred to ensure that safe and effective services are sustained and importantly that it contributes to maintaining service provision to patients and clients.

Medium to long term strategies to reduce agency expenditure include:

- WHST working with DHSSPS and NIMDTA to increase the Trust's allocation of doctors in training. WHST are expecting 5 additional trainees in Altnagelvin and 6 in the South West Acute Hospital this year;
- Contributing to regional workforce plans to ensure sufficient doctors training places are commissioned for future need;
- Making explicit representation of the Western Trust's challenges by engaging with Professor Bengoa as the expert Chair leading the panel considering the future configuration of Health and Social Care; and
- Working in partnership with the HSCB to commission more doctors for services such as emergency medicine and to make rotas more attractive for potential employees.

The Western HSC Trust is also working with the other HSC Trusts across the region on a parallel international recruitment plan.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following completion of the new paediatric ward and extension to Craigavon Area Hospital, to detail how parking arrangements will be improved; and whether this will provide an opportunity to improve access to disabled parking spaces.

(AQW 54866/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The new paediatric centre will be located in the current Car Park 1 at the Craigavon Area Hospital. Any car parking spaces that will be lost in car park 1 will be re-provided on site. The first phase of works involves extending the GP Out of Hours car park and developing additional parking spaces at Trust Headquarters. The level of provision of disabled spaces on site will continue as they are.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any discussions his Department has had with counterparts in (i) England; (ii) Scotland; (iii) Wales; and (iv) the Republic of Ireland on organ donation, in each of the last three years, including discussions on a cross-border Belfast/Dublin corridor for Organ Donation as referred to during his contribution to the Consideration Stage of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

(AQW 54867/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My officials regularly meet with their counterparts from England, Scotland and Wales within the strategic and operational coordinating group led by NHSBT. This group steers a wide range of organ donation policy and operational issues across the four UK jurisdictions. My officials also have an annual meeting with the senior executives from NHSBT to review policy and operational issues. The potential for collaboration between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on organ donation was discussed at a recent health sectoral meeting of the North South Ministerial Council.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all the community health initiatives the Public Health Agency has funded in South Down, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54882/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency commissions a wide range of community health services across Northern Ireland. The majority of programmes are funded at Trust – wide level. In respect of the South Down area, services are delivered in both the Southern and South Eastern HSC Trust areas, across a number of health and wellbeing programmes as follows -

- Tobacco
- Physical Activity
- Nutrition/Obesity Prevention
- Mental Health Promotion
- Suicide Prevention/Protect Life
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Teenage Pregnancy/Sexual Health

- Older People
- Home Accident Prevention/Falls Prevention
- Early Years
- Breast Feeding

Other initiatives include:

Sustainable communities:

- Services/support groups wishing to develop horticultural projects across the SEHSCT area.
- Food Banks
- Community Allotments and Gardens

Education:

- Service supporting adults and young people to re-engage with education across the SEHSCT area

Skin Cancer:

- awareness and prevention

Vulnerable Groups:

- Services to support the mental health needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender individuals

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the provision of out of hours GP services in South Down.

(AQW 54883/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Out of hours GP services are provided to the population of South Down by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. Out of hours services operate across five bases in the Trust area, including Newry and Kilkeel. However, securing sufficient medical cover to provide out of hours sessions across all five bases at all times has been a challenge for the Southern Trust and there have been occasions when it has been necessary to consolidate resources in the bases where patient demand is greatest, in the interests of patient and staff safety.

Patients from South Down contacting the out of hours service when either the Newry or Kilkeel base is closed will continue to be provided with telephone advice and, where appropriate, be given an appointment in an alternative base. Where clinically necessary, a home visit will be carried out.

The Southern Trust has taken a number of actions to support the GP out of hours service. These include the introduction of nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists to support GPs in managing the service; ongoing recruitment campaigns for GPs; and the provision of additional funding to boost capacity at busy times. To reduce the impact of workforce gaps, the Trust has established a link with Dalriada Urgent Care to support call triage. A peer review of the out of hours service in the Southern area has recently been completed, and the Trust is working with the Health and Social Care Board to implement the recommendations of this review.

Regionally, up to £3.1m has been made available in 2015/16 to build capacity in GP out of hours services, including £700,000 to contribute towards indemnity costs for GPs working in out of hours. A further £1.1m has been provided in-year to help providers meet increased demand for out of hours services over the winter months and the forthcoming Easter period. A regional review of GP out of hours services is nearing completion and will make recommendations to ensure the sustainability of GP out of hours services across Northern Ireland.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to develop a strategy that ensures people with mental health issues have access to recovery programmes that are person-centred and promote recovery.

(AQW 54901/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Since 2012, mental health services in Northern Ireland have been formally commissioned and delivered to promote recovery approaches in partnership with people who use services and their carers. The Implementing Recovery through Organisational Change (ImROC) Programme is being implemented in all Trusts in Northern Ireland. As a result, partnerships of people who use services, people who provide services (statutory and non-statutory) and carers have designed new person centred services in each Trust area. These include Recovery Colleges offering a curriculum of co-produced and co-taught courses and greater numbers of peer support workers.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he intends to promote the rights and interests of people with mental health problems to ensure they meet the needs of service users and carers.

(AQW 54902/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Mental health care is based on recovery principles which include co-working - i.e. the professional and the person using the service being jointly involved in designing and reviewing care and services. This way of working has been promoted through training for Trust staff in the Implementing Recovery through Organisational Change (ImROC) programme, and is embodied in the Regional Mental Health Care Pathway, which was launched in October 2014. The Care Pathway places the rights and interests of people with mental health problems at the heart of mental health service delivery.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he intends to set up a regional working group to examine the extent and impact of mental health services, addressing issues such as fragmentation, the urban-rural imbalance; and integration.

(AQW 54903/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Mental health services are regionally planned by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency in line with the Bamford Action Plan 2012-15 (which was extended to 31 March 2016) and the priorities in Transforming Your Care.

The Action Plan's implementation and outcomes are overseen by a regional interdepartmental senior officials group, with representatives from relevant Departments. This group is chaired by my Department.

An evaluation of the Bamford Action Plan is currently under way. The evaluation report, which is scheduled to be considered by the Executive in the summer, will make recommendations for the future delivery of mental health services, and will include consideration of issues in relation to fragmentation, urban and rural service delivery, and integration, which were identified by Action Mental Health in its recent evaluation of mental health service provision in Northern Ireland.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what plans he has to (i) ensure funding is made available for mental health services in order to achieve the service improvements proposed by the Bamford Review; and (ii) ring-fence mental health expenditure against any future budget cuts.

(AQW 54904/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Health and Social Care Board submit bids each financial year to the Department to fund mental health services, with the aim of improving these services in line with the findings and recommendations of the Bamford Review. These bids are prioritised and considered alongside the range of service developments and pressures that exist across the health and social care service.
- (ii) There are no plans to ring-fence mental health expenditure, nor are there any plans to cut the mental health budget. The total allocation to mental health services has increased to £247 million annually, and Northern Ireland was the only country in the United Kingdom to see an increase in spending on mental health by Trusts in the last two years, with 1% additional spending last year, and 2.6% more this year. I am committed to building on the improvements that have been made in mental health services since the Bamford review. Further reform and innovation will require funding. Some of that can be found by reprioritising existing resources, but new money will also be needed. Whilst this will be difficult to find, I have previously assured the Assembly of my commitment to ensure that we have sufficient means to meet the mental health challenges that we face as a community.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme rebates have been reinvested to fund access to new medicines.

(AQW 54907/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Receipts from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) go directly from the Department of Health (London) to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). PPRS receipts have been used to offset the growth in expenditure on branded medicines which includes new and innovative medicines.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of his current budget has been spent on research into Alzheimer's disease.

(AQW 54910/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The HSC R&D Division funds a range of clinical research projects and trials which are specifically seeking to address the needs of patients with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia and their families. Seven studies, which are specifically intended to address the needs of patients with dementia and their families as part of the Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme, have been co-funded since the start of 2014 in conjunction with The Atlantic Philanthropies, with a total budget of over £2 million. HSC R&D Division also funds 3 research nurses and 2 clinical leads to support the work of the Northern Ireland Clinical Research Network in Dementia. In total, my Department has committed £428, 416 and £620, 822 for research in dementia and dementia care for the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16 respectively.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of (i) the type of procedures, operations and treatment local people received through Extra Contractual Referrals in (a) 2012-13; (b) 2013-14; and (c) 2014-15; (ii) the number of people that received each type of treatment; (iii) the country people were sent to for treatments; and (iv) how many were sent to each country in each year since 2012.

(AQW 54922/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) & (ii) Information in relation to Extra Contractual Referrals (ECRs) is collected on the basis of approvals rather than the actual treatment carried out. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the numbers approved by speciality for acute ECRs. Not all approvals will necessarily result in treatment or in a transfer for treatment.

Table 1: Number of Acute ECR approvals, by specialty, in each of the last three years

Acute ECR Approvals – Specialty	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Orthopaedics	144	146	162
Neurology	126	120	109
Oncology	84	113	111
Paediatric Cardiology	60	106	84
Urology	56	71	89
Cardiology	94	58	44
Paediatrics	63	74	42
Paediatric neurology	40	49	67
Ophthalmology	63	48	40
Clinical Genetics	48	68	30
Haematology	27	42	38
Hepatology	33	26	37
Respiratory	25	29	30
Nephrology	21	29	12
Reproductive Medicine	6	17	28
Plastic Surgery	27	9	14
Other specialties	114	117	180
Grand Total	1031	1122	1117

Source: HSCB

Aggregate numbers for non-acute ECR approvals for the last three years are shown in Table 2. Compared with acute ECRs, the number of non-acute referrals/approvals is much lower. These cases tend to be extremely complex and require longer periods of specialist care, often over more than one year. Information has therefore also been provided on the number of non-acute ECRs funded in each of the last three years.

Table 2: Number of Non-acute ECR approvals, and number of non-acute ECRs funded in each of the last three years

Non-Acute ECR Approvals	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
New Approvals each year	23	23	28
No of ECRs funded in Year	61	58	75

Source: HSCB

- (iii) & (vi) Information on the countries identified in ECR referral applications in each of the last three years is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: ECR Approvals, by Country of Proposed Treatment, in each of the last three years

Country	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	Total
ROI	44	37	34	110
UK	1,007	1,099	1,105	3,142
Other Countries ¹	3	9	6	18
Grand Total	1,054	1,145	1,145	3,270

Source: HSCB

- ¹ In order to preserve patient confidentiality, due to small numbers, countries other than the UK and ROI have been aggregated under 'Other Countries'. These 'Other Countries' include the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, USA, France, Germany and Poland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the extent to which timescales between autism (a) referrals to initial assessment; and (b) initial assessments to diagnosis, as recommended in the September 2008 Independent Review of Autism Services, have been implemented; and (ii) the number and percentage of children under 15 years old that have fallen outside the recommended 13 weeks objective times for autism (a) referrals to initial assessment; and (b) initial assessments to diagnosis in each of the last four years.

(AQW 54924/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

1 a In 'Priorities for Action 2009/10' the following target was included:

By March 2010, ensure that all children wait no longer than 13 weeks for assessment following referral and a further 13 weeks for commencement of specialised treatment.

Information on autism waiting lists are collected on a monthly basis by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board from each of the five HSC Trusts.

b There is no target related to the time from commencement of assessment to diagnostic outcome for autism.

ii. a. Table 1 below details the number of children who have waited longer than 13 weeks from referral for an initial assessment for autism at 31 December in each of the last four years.

Table 1

Year	No. of children waiting >13 weeks
2012	219
2013	202
2014	700
2015	1,452

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Please note that figures refer to children aged 0 – 18 as data is not collected by age band

b Health and Social Care Trusts do not report on the time from commencement of assessment to diagnostic outcome.

An increased investment of an additional £2 million for Autism Services across Northern Ireland was announced on 14 February 2016. This new financial support will fund expanded teams in each HSC Trust in order to improve assessment times and access to Autism specific support services.

The Department will also continue to work with the HSC Board and Trusts in order to improve processes and remodel services to further drive down waiting lists and improve access to high quality services.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the treatments available to dermatology patients in the (a) Western; and (b) Northern Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 54939/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust provides Eczema clinics, Biologic clinics, Laser clinics, Cosmetic Camouflage clinics, Botox clinics, Roaccutane clinics, Sub Cut Methotrexate clinics. Phototherapy and Bath PUVA/ Oral PUVA, daily dressings and Patch tests are also offered. The Northern HSC Trust provides topical treatments, intra-lesional steroids, cryotherapy, phototherapy, Botox for hyperhidrosis and skin surgery.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for a MRI scan in the (a) Western; and (b) Northern Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 54940/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Diagnostic waiting times are collected in aggregate time bands, based on the length of time a patient is waiting for a diagnostic test, therefore it is not possible to calculate a mean waiting time. It is, however, possible to provide the median time band, a similar statistical measure.

The median waiting time for a MRI scan in the (a) Western and (b) Northern HSC Trusts, at 31st December 2015, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is between 3 and 6 weeks.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what connections his Department has with the Care Sector to foster links between the sector and Further and Higher Education providers to ensure that Health and Social Care Courses meet the needs of both private and public care providers.

(AQW 54952/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As policy lead for social care training, my Department, through the NI Social Care Council (NISCC) fosters links between social care employers in the statutory and independent sectors and Further and Higher Education (FHE) providers. The NISCC, as the regulator for the social care workforce and professional social work training courses works closely with employers and FHE to ensure that relevant courses and qualifications are available for individuals who wish to work in, or are employed, in social care in NI. My Department also has arrangements in place that foster links between employers of healthcare workers and education providers to ensure qualifications/courses are relevant to the needs of the sector.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 54237/11-16, to detail the timeframe for the completion of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's rationalisation plan for the Whiteabbey Hospital site. **(AQW 54953/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust hopes to complete its rationalisation plan for the Whiteabbey Hospital site mid 2017. This plan will identify the Trust's future requirements for the site and any possible Trust and Department owned land which can be declared surplus and available for disposal.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the suicide prevention strategy will be implemented. **(AQW 54958/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: The suicide prevention strategy "Protect Life" continues to be implemented by the Public Health Agency with a £7 million annual funding allocation from the Department.

Development of a new suicide prevention strategy is well advanced. Following public consultation on a draft of the new strategy, a final version will be published in the autumn with the commencement of the associated action plan expected towards the end of the year.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will establish a taskforce to deal with the high levels of suicide in Belfast. **(AQW 54959/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: In addition to the ongoing delivery of suicide prevention services in Belfast, arrangements are in place for responding to increased levels of suicide through the Belfast Community Response Plan Group. It is unlikely that the establishment of an additional layer, in the form of a task force, on top of the existing arrangements, would add further value to the work that is ongoing.

However, it is vitally important that this work is properly coordinated and that current practice is reviewed, including the learning from the implementation of the Community Response Plans. The Public Health Agency is to ensure that this is addressed through ongoing discussions with local groups and public services about the development of a Belfast-wide suicide prevention implementation plan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support services are available for the families of people with Alzheimer's disease. **(AQW 54960/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: In 2012/13 the Health and Social Care Board invested £1m recurrently in the development and enhancement of memory clinics across each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts, as part of the Department's regional strategy on Dementia. A further £1m was invested in 2013/14 on staffing resources for the memory clinics. These clinics will help to provide timely diagnosis for people with dementia and information and support to inform decisions about future care and treatment.

There is currently a small number of Dementia Navigators across Trusts. However, additional investment has been made available through the Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative project for the recruitment of a further 10 Navigators (two per Trust). These posts are expected to be filled later this year. Dementia Navigators will act as a single point of contact for people living with dementia and their carers to provide support and advice throughout the entire dementia journey from diagnosis to end of life. The Delivering Social Change project also aims to recruit 300 health and social care staff as dementia champions. These are staff who will advocate for people with dementia and provide information and support.

The voluntary sector (Alzheimer's Society and Age NI) also provide a range of support services specifically for people with a dementia and their carers. These services include: domiciliary/residential care; short breaks; befriending; and training for carers and staff.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail why the children's palliative care strategy has been delayed; and when it will be published. **(AQW 54965/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: My Department's 'Children's Palliative and End of Life Care in Northern Ireland Strategy' was delayed due to the need to complete an implementation and investment plan. Publication of the strategy is being considered alongside other competing health and social care services requiring new investment in the years ahead. It would be inappropriate to raise expectations about the implementation of the strategy by publishing it while my Department's overall budget position remains uncertain.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of families that have a child with a disability, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust; and of this number how many (i) have a designated key worker; and (ii) do not have a designated key worker.

(AQW 54967/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Figures are not available in the format requested. Table 1 below details the number of known children in need with a disability at 30 September 2015 by Health and Social Care Trust. All of these children have a designated key worker.

Table 1

Health & Social Care Trust	No. of children with a disability
Belfast	881
Northern	856
South Eastern	736
Southern	1,278
Western	706

Source: Health and Social Care Board – Delegated Statutory Functions Return 10.1.6

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the role of key workers for the families of children with disabilities; and whether this is a mandatory provision within Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 54972/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is assumed the term “key worker” refers to the lead professional in a case. The key worker plays an important role in the provision of services to children with disabilities and their families by carrying out an assessment of need and through the provision of advice, guidance, and access to a variety of services to safeguard and support disabled children/ young people and their families.

In cases where, for example, the key worker in a Health and Social Care Trust is a Social Worker then the statutory/mandatory requirements of the Children (NI) Order 1995, Disabled Persons Act (NI) 1989, Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1978, Carers (Recognition and Services Act) 1995, Health and Social Services Order (NI) 1972 and the Direct Payment and Carers Act 2002 will apply.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support exists for parents and guardians that leave employment to provide full time care for a child that has a disability.

(AQW 54973/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Support is provided to families that have children with disabilities based upon assessed need. Disabled children and their families can access support and services through the Health and Social Care Trusts’ Children’s Disability and/or Community Health Teams.

An assessment of need will be undertaken and a support plan put in place to promote the child’s personal and social development, and support the parents in their caring role. This may include onward referrals to other professionals and services, and co-ordinated support.

Furthermore, those parents who leave employment to provide full- time care for a disabled child may be eligible for welfare benefits through the Social Security Agency.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the financial support available to families that have children with disabilities to help cover additional expenses related to their care.

(AQW 54974/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Health and Social Care Trusts provide support to families that have children with disabilities based on their assessed need. The options available for families are discussed with parents, children and young people during the assessment process.

Parents and carers may also be eligible to apply for welfare benefits through the Social Security Agency for themselves as carers or for their child through Disability Living Allowance. In addition, Article 18 (6) of the Children (NI) Order 1995 allows HSC Trusts to make a payment to children/families in exceptional circumstances.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding his Department has provided to FASA in each of the last three years.

(AQW 54976/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not provide direct funding to FASA. However the organisation has contracts with the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Trusts to deliver addiction and suicide prevention services.

Through these sources, FASA received funding of £500k in 2013/14 financial year, £642k in 2013/14 and £708k in 2015/16 to provide addiction and suicide prevention services.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in Foyle in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent. **(AQW 54978/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: Due to the strategic and (for Interreg) cross border nature of projects, Departmental spend may be directed towards regional administrative centres rather than the location of activity. As such some spend cannot be readily disaggregated for particular regions.

- (i) Spend in the last ten years includes that relating to the end of the Peace II and Interreg III, for the 2000 – 2006 funding period, as well as the Interreg IV Programme for 2007 – 2013. Details of the total amount of matched and unmatched spend on these Programmes is provided in the table below. Where match funding was provided, this contributed 25% of the spend on the project, with the remaining 75% being provided by the European Commission.

Programme	Lead body	Matched by DHSSPS?	Matched by RoI?	Amount of spend	Area
1 Peace II	CAWT	Yes	Yes	£10.80m	Entire border area
2 Peace II	DHSSPS	Yes	No	£10.66m	All of Northern Ireland
3 Peace II	DHSSPS	No	No	£0.98m	All of Northern Ireland
4 Interreg III	DHSSPS	Yes	Yes	£6.74m	Entire border area
5 Interreg IV	DHSSPS	Yes	Yes	£25m (approx)	Entire border area

For Peace II (1. and 2. in the table above), £101,071.81 of the total spend with match funding provided by DHSSPS was provided to organisations located in Foyle, during the last 10 years. For Interreg III, £4,030,299.09 of the total spend with match funding provided by DHSSPS was provided in this time period. It has not been possible to quantify the precisely the expenditure on projects in the Foyle area under the Interreg IV Programme.

- (ii) I can confirm that my Department matched European Union funding to support a range of activity in Foyle under the Peace II, Interreg III and Interreg IV Programmes. Examples of this activity include:
- outpatient and day-cases for ENT services at Altnagelvin Hospital;
 - obesity programmes which were delivered in Creggan and Waterside areas by the Old Library Trust's Healthy Living Centre;
 - pre-pregnancy diabetes care clinics were provided in Altnagelvin Hospital;
 - 'Strengthening Families' alcohol programme;
 - educational counselling and support projects for parents with young children;
 - support for early years providers to reach quality standards;
 - CAWT Traveller Health conference which highlighted Traveller Health Services provision and developments in Foyle and other areas.

More recently, the Interreg VA Programme 2013-2020 currently has €53m available for health projects across Northern Ireland. Final decisions on the allocation of funding to projects, including any required match funding from the Department, will be taken before the end of summer 2016.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to recruit permanent staff to the Emergency Department in Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry. **(AQW 55007/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: A number of recruitment initiatives are currently underway through the Southern HSC Trust to appoint permanent staff to the Emergency Department in Daisy Hill Hospital with several appointments to be made in the coming weeks. The Trust has also embarked on a European recruitment campaign for Emergency Medicine doctors.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 53931/11-16, to detail (i) how funding is allocated to individual contact centres; (ii) how much has been allocated to each centre; and (iii) whether any contact centres have been subject to efficiency savings by Health and Social Care Trusts. **(AQW 55008/11-16)**

Mr Hamilton: The table below shows the funding allocated to each individual contact centre for 2015/16 and any efficiency savings applied.

Funding HSC Organisation	Child Contact Centre	Funding 2015/16 (£)	Efficiency Savings
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	Central Belfast	£29,360	Efficiency savings of 1.7% were applied in 2015/16
	Knock	£29,360	Efficiency savings of 1.7% were applied in 2015/16
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	Carrickfergus	£28,242*	No Efficiency savings.
	Coleraine	£25,894*	No Efficiency savings.
	Mid Ulster	£25,894*	No Efficiency savings.
	Ballymena	£25,894*	No Efficiency savings.
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	Newtownards/Bangor	£28,418	Efficiency savings of 6.5% were applied in 2015/16
	Cloona	£26,532	Efficiency savings of 6.5% were applied in 2015/16
Southern Health Social Care Trust	Armagh	£27,440	No Efficiency savings.
	Craigavon	£30,000	No Efficiency savings.
	Newry	£30,000	No Efficiency savings.
Health and Social Care Board	Ballynahinch	£28,000	No Efficiency savings.
	Foyle	£37,997	No Efficiency savings.
	Irvinestown	£28,000	No Efficiency savings.
	Omagh	£37,997	No Efficiency savings.

*Funding levels shown for Northern HSCT are until end February 2015/16

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety under the Families Matter Strategy, to detail the future arrangements to fund Contact Centres beyond 1 April 2016.

(AQW 55011/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: After 1 April 2016 Child Contact Centres will continue to be funded by Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board.

The Families Matter Strategy, under which Child Contact Centres are funded, will be reviewed, starting in 2016. As part of that review, my Department will consider the role of Child Contact Centres and existing funding arrangements, with a view to establishing whether a more strategic approach to funding can be adopted.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many people in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area have currently been waiting in excess of 52 weeks for elective surgery.

(AQW 55023/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At 31st December 2015, the most recent date for which official statistics are available, there were a total of 11,552 patients waiting for inpatient treatment in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Of these, 1,475 (12.8%) were waiting in excess of 52 weeks.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when smoke was first reported in the basement of Craigavon Area Hospital; and (ii) what steps were taken by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust following its discovery on site.

(AQW 55026/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) A member of the Trust staff alerted the hospital switchboard to a smell of smoke in an area of the hospital at 14.50 on 26th February 2016. At 15.01 the building fire alarm sounded as smoke was detected in the Basement Area.
- (ii) On receipt of the initial call to the hospital switchboard a Trust Fire Officer was informed and a check of the area in question was undertaken.

Upon activation of the fire alarm, emergency procedures as per the Trust's incident management plans were immediately enacted with a precautionary evacuation of the Radiology and Out Patients Departments and restricted access to the areas affected.

The Trust's Estates Staff and Fire Officers initiated a search of the location of the fire alarm activation to search for the source of the smoke. No fire was found.

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service attended site at 15.10 and took overall control of the situation. After conducting a thorough check of the area, the NIFRS deemed the building safe and the hospital was returned to normal operation.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the future plans his Department has for the delivery of orthodontist services.

(AQW 55036/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is anticipated that a recent review of Consultant Led Hospital Dental Services will help achieve greater team working to enable the delivery of safer, more effective, and more efficient orthodontist services. The vast majority of routine orthodontic treatment is provided in specialist high street practices. My Department has been in negotiation with the dental profession for some time now in the development of new dental contractual models for Northern Ireland, including for orthodontic treatment. These are still subject to negotiation and consultation. It is proposed that these modernised dental services will allow people in Northern Ireland to have access to an appropriate range of high quality and effective dental care and to prioritise resources to treat dental and oral disease for those orthodontic cases that are measured as having the highest need.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a consistent approach for all Health and Social Care Trusts in regards to making and attending hospital appointments for partially sighted and blind people.

(AQW 55037/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Health and Social Care Trusts offer appointment letters in accessible formats using large clear print. In addition, in January 2016, "Making Communication Accessible for All" a Guide for Health and Social Care Staff was produced to enable staff to communicate more effectively with people who have a disability or a communication support need including those who are blind or visually impaired.

HSC Trusts also provide practical help and support when a patient who is blind or visually impaired arrives at hospital. This includes the provision of volunteers who offer a meet and greet service and patients also have access to Eye Clinic Liaison Officers for help and support.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current waiting times from initial assessment through to treatment, for both routine and urgent paediatric dental service patients in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 55063/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The waiting time for an appointment for a routine patient is currently approximately 12 months. The waiting time for an appointment for an urgent outpatient assessment is currently 6-8 weeks.

Children with complex dental treatment needs, and children with special needs, often require treatment by a specialist dentist and often under general anaesthesia (GA). This level of dentistry and anaesthesia is not available, or provided by general dental practitioners who are able to deliver routine care and treatment to the vast majority of our child population. The current waiting time for routine treatment under GA is 4-6 months. The current waiting time for urgent treatment under GA is approximately 8 weeks and all patients on this list have been allocated appointments.

The specialist surgical paediatric dental service is a consultant-led service, delivered in conjunction with anaesthetic services in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. In order to reduce the waiting times for children to be seen by a paediatric dentist, and to cover staff vacancies a part-time locum consultant paediatric surgeon and an oral surgeon have been employed. Additional waiting list initiative clinics are also being provided.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the disparity in waiting times for children with special needs that require treatment via the paediatric dental service in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and their peers that can receive treatment via their general dental practitioner.

(AQW 55064/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The waiting time for an appointment for a routine patient is currently approximately 12 months. The waiting time for an appointment for an urgent outpatient assessment is currently 6-8 weeks.

Children with complex dental treatment needs, and children with special needs, often require treatment by a specialist dentist and often under general anaesthesia (GA). This level of dentistry and anaesthesia is not available, or provided by general dental practitioners who are able to deliver routine care and treatment to the vast majority of our child population. The current waiting time for routine treatment under GA is 4-6 months. The current waiting time for urgent treatment under GA is approximately 8 weeks and all patients on this list have been allocated appointments.

The specialist surgical paediatric dental service is a consultant-led service, delivered in conjunction with anaesthetic services in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. In order to reduce the waiting times for children to be seen by a paediatric dentist, and to cover staff vacancies a part-time locum consultant paediatric surgeon and an oral surgeon have been employed. Additional waiting list initiative clinics are also being provided.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how his Department is ensuring waiting times are reduced in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust paediatric dental service.

(AQW 55065/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The waiting time for an appointment for a routine patient is currently approximately 12 months. The waiting time for an appointment for an urgent outpatient assessment is currently 6-8 weeks.

Children with complex dental treatment needs, and children with special needs, often require treatment by a specialist dentist and often under general anaesthesia (GA). This level of dentistry and anaesthesia is not available, or provided by general dental practitioners who are able to deliver routine care and treatment to the vast majority of our child population. The current waiting time for routine treatment under GA is 4-6 months. The current waiting time for urgent treatment under GA is approximately 8 weeks and all patients on this list have been allocated appointments.

The specialist surgical paediatric dental service is a consultant-led service, delivered in conjunction with anaesthetic services in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. In order to reduce the waiting times for children to be seen by a paediatric dentist, and to cover staff vacancies a part-time locum consultant paediatric surgeon and an oral surgeon have been employed. Additional waiting list initiative clinics are also being provided.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all summer schemes for children with special educational needs funded by his Department; and for his assessment of whether the provision of this service is sufficient.

(AQW 55066/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The provision of summer schemes is mainly provided by organisations outside the Health and Social Care through a range of contracts with community and voluntary providers, where summer schemes are included in addition to support provided through direct payments etc. These services are provided on the basis of need and it would not be possible to disaggregate the costs.

I can advise however that in 2015/16, my Department received £50k from OFMDFM to support holiday schemes for children with a disability. A breakdown of this funding is provided in the attached Annex. OFMDFM has also provided £50k for 16/17 and the application process for organisations to apply will be taken forward by the Health and Social Care Board.

The key focus is on promoting inclusion and participation for children with additional needs and disability so that they can have the same opportunities to access summer schemes and afterschool facilities as any other child.

Funding to Holiday Schemes for Children with a Disability in 2015/16

GROUP	2015/16
Newry Early Years Children & Family Centre	£3,426
Kids Together Belfast	£4,395
Killowen Primary School	£1,378.17
Solas	£5,619.50
Foyle Down Syndrome	£14,883.50
Desart Lodge Nursery	£9,824.25
Camowen Partnership	£9,897.50
Total	£49,423.92

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the (a) matched; and (b) unmatched European Union funding his Department has spent in West Tyrone in each of the last ten years; and (ii) where this money was spent.

(AQW 55072/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Due to the strategic and, in relation to the Interreg Programme, cross-border nature of projects, Departmental spend may be directed towards regional administrative centres rather than the location of activity. As such, some spend cannot be readily disaggregated for particular regions.

- Spend in the last ten years includes that relating to the end of the Peace II and Interreg III, for the 2000 – 2006 funding period, as well as the Interreg IV Programme for 2007 – 2013. Details of the total amount of matched and unmatched spend on these Programmes is provided in the table below. Where match funding was provided, this contributed 25% of the spend on the project, with the remaining 75% being provided by the European Commission.

Programme	Lead body	Matched by DHSSPS?	Matched by RoI?	Amount of spend	Area
6 Peace II	CAWT	Yes	Yes	£10.80m	Entire border area

Programme	Lead body	Matched by DHSSPS?	Matched by Rol?	Amount of spend	Area
7 Peace II	DHSSPS	Yes	No	£10.66m	All of Northern Ireland
8 Peace II	DHSSPS	No	No	£0.98m	All of Northern Ireland
9 Interreg III	DHSSPS	Yes	Yes	£6.74m	Entire border area
10. Interreg IV	DHSSPS	Yes	Yes	£25m (approx)	Entire border area

For Peace II (1. and 2. in the table above), £109,390.75 of the total spend with match funding provided by my Department was allocated to organisations located in West Tyrone during the last 10 years. It has not been possible to quantify precisely the expenditure on projects in the West Tyrone area under the Interreg III and Interreg IV Programmes.

- I can confirm that my Department matched European Union funding to support a range of activity in West Tyrone under the Peace II, Interreg III and Interreg IV Programmes. Examples of this activity include:
 - outpatient and day cases for ENT services at Tyrone County Hospital;
 - pre-pregnancy care clinics for those with diabetes provided in Tyrone County Hospital
 - community awareness programme, which operated between Strabane and Donegal councils – Derg Valley Advocacy Network, the ‘Speaking Up, Reaching Out’ Programme, disability awareness training for school children and ‘Change a Little, Change a Lot’ campaign.
 - educational counselling and support projects for parents with young children;
 - support for early years providers to reach quality standards;
 - North/South Suicide Research study, which undertook clinical interviews with patients who presented in suicidal crisis in the Omagh area;
 - CAWT Traveller Health conference which highlighted Traveller Health Services provision and developments in Tyrone and other areas.

More recently, the Interreg VA Programme (2013-2020) currently has €53m available for health projects across Northern Ireland. Final decisions on the allocation of funding to projects, including any required match funding from my Department, will be taken before the end of summer 2016.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of agency staff in full time equivalents, employed by (a) his Department; and (b) each of its arm’s-length bodies, including their grades, in each week since June 2015.

(AQW 55095/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) Nil
- (b) The precise information requested is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The table below details expenditure on Agency staff, by each of the Department’s Arm’s Length Bodies for the period 1st June to 31st December 2015:

Organisation	Agency Expenditure 1st June - 31st December 2015 £'000
Health and Social Care Board	206
Western Health & Social Care Trust	10,200
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	9,300
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	6,300
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	7,000
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	10,800
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	335
Business Services Organisation	1,300
Public Health Agency	96
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service	11
Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency	45
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service	547

Organisation	Agency Expenditure 1st June - 31st December 2015 £'000
Northern Social Care Council	26
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority	43
Patient Client Council	9
Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council	7

* Source HSC ALBs

** Expenditure Figures include Medical Locum spend

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the availability of meals on wheels for people in the Western Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) to detail the number of people who receive meals on wheels in (a) Fermanagh; and (b) the rest of the Western Health and Social Care Trust compared to 2000; and (iii) whether the Western Health and Social Care Trust is accepting new entrants to the meals on wheels programme.

(AQW 55118/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Western Health and Social Care Trust is undertaking a review of its meals on wheels service in consultation with service users and providers, to ensure the provision of a high quality, safe and value for money service. The Trust will continue to provide and deliver a meals on wheels service to people who meet the regionally agreed eligibility criteria.
- (ii) A total of 568 people are currently in receipt of a meals on wheels service in the Western Trust area, and 249 of those people are from the Fermanagh area. It is not possible to compare this data with the year 2000 as the Trust was only established in 2007.
- (iii) The Trust will continue to accept new entrants to the meals on wheels service as long as they meet the regionally agreed eligibility criteria.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on future plans for the Josh Cardwell Centre on the Holywood Road, Belfast.

(AQW 55127/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) is currently considering the development of the Joss Cardwell Centre for the potential provision of residential and short break placements for children with a learning disability. An outline business case is being produced by the Trust.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service of non-attendance at outpatient appointments in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 55129/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The cost to the Health Service of non-attendance at outpatient appointments is not available and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Did Not Attends were recorded for outpatient appointments in the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 55130/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of Did Not Attends (DNAs) recorded for outpatient appointments is published annually as part of the 'Outpatient Activity Statistics' publication and can be found at the following link for the 2014/15 financial year;

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/hospital-statistics-outpatient-activity-statistics-201415>

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current public engagement initiatives to raise awareness of medicines management, including the use of prescription medication.

(AQW 55133/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Current public engagement initiatives to raise awareness of medicines management and the use of prescription medication include an initiative by the Public Health Agency (PHA), in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams on the roll out of a drug disposal scheme (RAPID) which allows people to dispose of illicit drugs and unwanted prescribed medication.

The PHA has also commissioned the charity, ASCERT, to deliver a range of substance misuse awareness courses to professionals working in both the statutory and voluntary/community sectors across Northern Ireland; one of these courses covers prescribed medication. Awareness initiatives about risks around unsafe use of prescribed medication are also supported by the PHA.

The Health & Social Care Board (HSCB) has been engaging with the public recently to raise awareness in relation to medicines waste and the impact on health and social care. Other initiatives by the HSCB include the introduction of a pain tool kit, an awareness campaign on how to manage respiratory conditions such as asthma, a self-awareness campaign and the 'Choose well' campaign which is designed to help patients make the right decision on which services they choose based on their symptoms.

In addition, my Department has recently published a Medicines Optimisation Quality Framework which aims to support better health outcomes by focusing attention on gaining the best possible outcome from medicines every time that they are prescribed, dispensed or administered. Patient involvement is a key aspect of the Framework and in that context, work is ongoing with the Department of Finance and Personnel to organise an Innovation Lab to help understand peoples' experiences of their medicines. The Patient and Client Council is engaged in that initiative in gathering views from patients.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on medicine management, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55134/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not hold this information centrally. As medicines management cuts across a range of disciplines and multi-disciplinary professionals in primary, secondary and community care it would be extremely difficult to accurately cost this.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the role of pharmacists in improving medicines management.

(AQW 55135/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Medicines management is complex and multi-factorial and so must incorporate a number of components in order to be effective. The evolving role of pharmacists has greatly improved the safety and quality of patient care resulting in health gain and economy of use of healthcare resources.

This is articulated in the recently published Medicines Optimisation Quality Framework (MOQF) which supports effective medicines management in all healthcare settings. In that context, I recently announced an investment in 2016/17 of up to £2.6 million, rising to £14 million per year in 2020/21, for pharmacists to work alongside GPs with the aim of improving the quality and safety of prescribing to deliver improved patient outcomes.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the guidelines he plans to issue to clinicians regarding the termination of fatal foetal abnormalities will be published.

(AQW 55141/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I aim to publish the guidance on termination of pregnancy for health care professionals within the current mandate, subject to the approval of the Executive. Approval of the Executive is being actively sought. The guidance will reflect current legislation governing termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will follow up on the case of the firefighter who died while on duty on the 31 October 2003, given that his family have now secured the name of the officer who ordered him onto the roof of the Gorteen House Hotel in Limavady.

(AQW 55154/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I fully appreciate the pain and loss that Mrs McCloskey and the McCloskey family continue to feel from the loss of their husband and father in the most tragic of circumstances. I also note that the Attorney General has decided not to direct a second inquest into his death.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the number of women with a fatal foetal abnormality diagnosis who will present during the six-month expected deliberation time of the working group to consider fatal foetal abnormalities.

(AQW 55155/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to provide a figure for the number of women who may present during this time.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision is in place to provide sensitive and specialised care to families with a fatal foetal diagnosis to ensure that mothers are supported during the perinatal period.

(AQW 55159/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Any woman who is diagnosed as having a baby with a Fatal Foetal Abnormality will have her care provided by the Maternity team which will include an obstetrician and midwife with input from her GP as needed. All Trusts have bereavement specialists available and in some Trusts specific bereavement midwives are available. If needed, a neonatologist will also be able to provide care and advice to the mother and her family in the antenatal period and in the postnatal period should her baby be born with some signs of life. At all times care specific to the woman's needs will be provided in a compassionate and caring manner and help from other professionals or groups can be advised upon as required.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for an update on the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's consultation on the delivery of Mental Health and Learning Disability Day Services; and (ii) when he will receive the Trust's recommendations.

(AQW 55160/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust consultations on the delivery of Mental Health and Learning Disability Day Services closed on 14 January 2016, following two extensions to the original deadline. The Trust received more than 2,000 responses, and the need to ensure that due weight and consideration is given to each of these means that the initial timeframe for the exercise has been extended.
- (ii) The Trust continues to collate and analyse responses, and discussions with the Health and Social Care Board are about to be completed. Thereafter, a decision on future recommendations will be made by the Trust Board, before referral to my Department for a final decision. I expect that the decision-making process will be completed by early summer 2016.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all allocations being considered under the £30 million Transformation Fund.

(AQW 55162/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: On 2nd March I confirmed the creation of a £30m Transformation Fund, to be invested in projects and initiatives focused on innovation, prevention and collaboration.

I also announced the first allocation of £2.3m to support the implementation of a new Medicines Optimisation Quality Framework for Northern Ireland.

Further announcements on allocations will be made in due course.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has a strategy in place to work with the Department of Education to educate school children on the importance of looking after their teeth.

(AQW 55173/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At present there is no formal strategy in place specifically with regard to working with the Department of Education to educate school children on the importance of looking after their teeth; though the 2007 Oral Health Strategy endorses partnership working with educational bodies, councils and other stakeholders to promote good oral and dental health. Currently there is collaboration between my Department, the Public Health Agency, Department of Education, Education Authority, Food Standards Agency and safefood, to ensure that good nutrition is promoted in schools and that healthy food and drink choices are made available during the school day. Although not directly highlighting dental health messages, this work makes a significant contribution to reducing the consumption of sugary foods and drinks in schools and can be expected to have a positive impact on dental health of our children. The PHA/DHSSPS and Department of Education jointly fund a Food in Schools Coordinator (1.0WTE) to take forward the Food in Schools agenda. Children in special schools are still serviced by the Community Dental Service and oral health promotion staff still visit nursery schools and schools in the 20% most deprived areas with the aim of preventing dental disease and improving oral health.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of administering the common flu vaccine in this financial year.

(AQW 55174/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Due to details of the price agreement for the Fluenz Tetra vaccine, which is offered to children, being commercially confidential, it is not possible to detail the cost of administering the annual seasonal flu programme in 2015/16.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department are supporting applications for Horizon2020 funding.

(AQW 55176/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In February 2016 I launched the HSC R&D Strategy, Research for Better Health and Social Care. The Strategy sets out our ambition to increase investment in health-related research and development by competing successfully for R&D funding. It specifically signposts Horizon 2020 as an important funding source.

Over recent years my Department has been working to increase our capacity for participating in EU funding opportunities through strong European engagement. We have signed Memoranda of Understanding with a number of regions and have played an active role in the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA). Through the EIP-AHA Northern Ireland has been recognised as a Reference Site, which signifies that we are one of the foremost regions in Europe in the area of healthcare innovation. This enhanced European profile has led to new networks and opened up new opportunities to collaborate in EU funding proposals. In addition, HSC R&D Division continues to provide funding support for HSC researchers involved in drafting Horizon 2020 bids, and has organized and participated in a number of regional workshops to raise awareness of the opportunities.

During 2014/15 and 2015/16 there have been a number of successful Horizon 2020 funding bids involving our health and social care professionals working in collaboration with our universities and European partners.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number; and (ii) name of cancer drugs that are available through the Cancer Drugs Fund in England but not available in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 55177/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The list of drugs currently available through the English Cancer Drugs Fund can be accessed via the following link: - www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ncdf-list-nov-15.pdf

Drugs on the English Cancer Drugs Fund list which are not routinely commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board can be made available to patients in Northern Ireland by means of an Individual Funding Request (IFR) subject to the application meeting the current IFR eligibility criteria.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total amount his Department has received from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme; and where this money was spent, broken down over the last three years.

(AQW 55178/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

Receipts from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) go directly from the Department of Health (London) to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). The total amount received by the HSCB in the last three financial years is as follows:

Financial year	PPRS receipts
2013/14	£2.9m
2014/15	£16.7m
2015/16 (to date)	£28.1m

PPRS receipts have been used to offset the growth in expenditure on branded medicines which includes new and innovative medicines

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the extra costs incurred during the completion of the Trauma Centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital for (i) replacing door handles; (ii) replacing ventilation systems; and (iii) any other extra costs.

(AQW 55179/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Trust has not replaced any door handles or ventilation systems during the completion of the new Critical Care Centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital and therefore incurred no additional costs for these items.

The contractor has funded repairs to date which are estimated to be in the order of £9.5m. The Trust has also incurred costs (e.g. additional design costs) in the region of £1.9m which will be recovered under the terms of the contract. An interim payment is currently being processed however the Trust is withholding £1.6m in liquidated damages plus retentions. Retentions total approximately £3.4m.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of ambulance response times in West Tyrone over the last three years; and how many call outs have missed his Department's response time targets.

(AQW 55185/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department's target relates to regional and Local Commissioning Group area rather than constituency and states that by March 2016, 72.5% of Category A (life threatening) calls should be responded to within eight minutes, 67.5% in each Local Commissioning Group area. The table below provides information for the Western Local Commissioning Group area, which includes West Tyrone.

Category A Calls	Western Local Commissioning Group Area		
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of calls resulting in an emergency response which arrives at the scene of the incident	7,989	8,204	9,248
Number of calls resulting in an emergency response which arrives at the scene of the incident within 8 minutes	5,330	5,464	5,539
Percentage arriving at the scene of the incident within 8 minutes	66.7%	66.6%	59.9%

Although the percentage of calls responded to within eight minutes reduced over this period, demand increased by 15.8% so the number of calls which received a response within eight minutes increased. The Health and Social Care Board and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust are working to improve ambulance response.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients in West Tyrone presented to Emergency Departments due to mental ill-health in each of the last three years.
(AQW 55186/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of patients presenting at emergency care departments in West Tyrone due to mental ill-health is not available.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how much his Department has spent highlighting the need for blood donations in each of the last three years.
(AQW 55202/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All of NIBTS' advertising is spent by Donor Services on promoting blood donation and recruiting donors. The amount spent on campaign advertising in each of the last three years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Advertising spend (£)
2013/14	72,235
2014/15	70,350
2015/16 to date(8 March 2016)	51,519

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (a) number of blood donations; and (b) blood stock in each of the last three years.
(AQW 55203/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of blood donations and the average blood stocks in each of the last three years are detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Donations	Stock
2014/15	53,543	1,429 units (equivalent to ~10 days)
2013/14	55,055	1,550 units (equivalent to ~ 9 days)
2012/13	57,409	1,228 units (equivalent to ~ 7 days)

Source: NIBTS

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any outcomes following the recent meeting of the Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention.
(AQW 55219/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: At the meeting of the Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention held on 29 February, it was agreed that more use needs to be made of different datasets on suicide and self harm in Northern Ireland and that Public Health Agency, DHSSPS and other agencies should investigate how this information can be linked together.

It was also agreed the Public Health Agency would consider suicide awareness and intervention training needs of a wider range of individuals who deal with members of the public.

There was discussion around the need to respond to recent high levels of suicide in Belfast. It was agreed that existing suicide prevention practice in Belfast should be reviewed, including the learning from the implementation of the Community Response Plans. The Public Health Agency is to take this forward with local community groups and public services in the context of the development of a Belfast-wide suicide prevention implementation plan.

The Public Health Agency provided an update on progress of the Rivers / Foyle Bridge project to prevent suicide in this area and agreed to keep the Group informed of progress.

It was also agreed that the main action points from the meeting would be shared with members of the Suicide Strategy Implementation Body and the local Protect Life Implementation groups.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an assessment of payroll processing across all Health and Social Care Trusts.
(AQW 55232/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Payroll processing is undertaken on behalf of HSC Trusts by the BSO Payroll Shared Service Centre (PSSC).

The PSSC undertakes weekly, fortnightly and monthly pay cycles for an HSC employee base of approx. 65,000 covering a multitude of grades and allowances and has processed some 388,123 transactions totalling £649 million during 2015/16.

The performance of the Payroll SSC is closely monitored by the BSO's Board in order to ensure an efficient service for its customers.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of the DNAV pilot project.

(AQW 55234/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am very aware that it is important to enable people living with diabetes to take control of their condition and to utilise innovative technology which has the greatest potential for improving outcomes.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust first began to pilot the d-Nav system for insulin guidance in 2013 with an initial small cohort which expanded to over 200 patients. Initial evaluation of the system demonstrated improved control of blood sugar and more effective use of insulin therapy amongst those using the system.

In the Summer of 2015 the decision was taken to expand the service further to 700 patients with funding secured until the end of the 16/17 financial year to enable this. The number of patients currently using the service currently stands at approximately 460 with new referrals being made regularly both from secondary care teams within the Trust and from local GP practices. The users are predominantly people with type 2 diabetes who require insulin therapy as well as a smaller number who have Type 1.

The Trust is required to carry out a full evaluation of the service and present it to commissioners for consideration in the latter part of 2016. This will enable a decision to be made in respect of both continuation and further roll out of the service, subject to the availability of funding at that time.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people that have been treated for gout in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55238/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of people that have been treated for gout in each of the last five years is not available.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available for people with ME in North Down.

(AQW 55269/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Patients with suspected ME may be referred by their GP to related specialty consultants who will, where possible, decide on a treatment path which may include treating symptoms through medication or onward referral to services such as physio, rheumatology, or Pain Clinic in line with NICE Guidance

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail to number of (i) people with HIV; and (ii) the number of HIV diagnoses in West Tyrone, in the last five years.

(AQW 55274/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people living with or diagnosed with HIV is not collected at constituency level.

The number of new HIV diagnoses within Northern Ireland is published annually at the following address:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-protection/sexually-transmitted-infections>

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of permanent occupational therapists supporting the resettlement of patients from Muckamore Abbey Hospital; and (ii) the long term plans for occupational therapy provision in Muckamore Abbey Hospital for patients across all wards.

(AQW 55275/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The Health and Social Care Board is currently funding two temporary occupational therapy posts in Muckamore Abbey Hospital which will continue for a further year until the resettlement process is completed.
- (ii) The Belfast HSC Trust will be recruiting a permanent occupational therapist for patients who are in active treatment in Muckamore Abbey Hospital (those who are admitted from the community and returned home again following treatment).

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will further invest in adult Autism Spectrum Disorder services.

(AQW 55276/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: As part of the wider reform of autism services regionally, the Health and Social Care Board are working with the Health and Social Care Trusts to review the scope and range of adult provision, with a view to identifying new ways of building capacity across services.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of the spend in 2015-16 of the additional £40m allocated in November 2015 to address waiting lists.
(AQW 55286/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The allocation of an additional £40m is expected to benefit some 60,000 to 70,000 patients who would otherwise be waiting. Given that the majority of this additional activity is being delivered between January 2016 and March 2016, the final volumes and costs will only be known after year end. Work continues to maximise the number of patients who will be assessed, diagnosed and treated.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of the additional £40m allocated in November 2015 to address waiting lists will be spent by 31 March 2016 for this purpose.
(AQW 55287/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Improving waiting times continues to be one of my key priorities and the vast majority of the additional resources made available by the Executive are going directly towards tackling waiting times. Given that the majority of this additional activity is being delivered between January 2016 and March 2016, the final volumes and costs will only be known after year end.

Work continues to maximise the number of patients to be assessed, diagnosed and treated.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the recommendation by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for two cycles of in vitro fertilisation treatment is not available in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 55293/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has endorsed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline on Fertility (CG156) which, among other things, recommends that women should be offered three full cycles of IVF. Unfortunately due to budget pressures since the current policy was introduced, it has not yet been possible to fully implement the clinical guideline or increase the number of IVF cycles offered to patients as there are significant cost implications. Any new investment in this service will have to be considered alongside other competing health and social care services requiring new investment in the years ahead.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what research is available detailing why Northern Ireland has the highest rate of still births in the UK.
(AQW 55294/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Mothers and Babies Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquires across the UK (MBRRACE-UK) produced a "Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report" in June 2015 and a further supplement to that report in December 2015. These reports are available at <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/mbrpace-uk/reports/MBRRACE-UK%20Perinatal%20Report%202015.pdf>

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what information and practical care is available to expectant mothers with type 2 diabetes.
(AQW 55295/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: All five Health and Social Care Trusts have a specialist, multidisciplinary clinic for women with diabetes.

Practical advice and information is given regarding safe planning of pregnancy with specific advice given on optimising glycaemic control, weight management, safe use of medication, Folic acid supplementation, ensuring up to date retinal assessment and smoking cessation.

Written literature, DVDs and websites are made available pre conception and during pregnancy.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of GP out of hours services in the Western Health and Social Trust area and how the gaps in this service can be remedied.
(AQW 55310/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The GP Out-of-Hours (OOH) service in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area is provided by Western Urgent Care, one of 5 Out of Hours providers in Northern Ireland. The service is provided across five bases - Altnagelvin, Enniskillen, Limavady, Omagh and Strabane.

Like all Out of Hours providers, Western Urgent Care faces increasing challenges in providing a full service due to increasing demand and difficulty in filling shifts. Although Western Urgent Care aims to provide a service at all bases 7 days a week, increasing demand and difficulty filling shifts means that at times it is necessary to consolidate and prioritise resources in the interests of patient and staff safety.

When a GP is unavailable at a local base, Western Urgent Care will seek to move a GP from another base to carry out a booked appointments session and so to ensure that patients can continue to be seen locally. Patients contacting the service after a booked appointments session may be asked to attend another base. Home visits continue to be carried out as normal where clinically necessary.

Western Urgent Care and the Health and Social Care Board have taken steps to increase GP capacity and fill shifts.

A Local Enhanced Service (LES) is in place in the Western area whereby GP principals provide additional clinical time (via booked appointments) for a 2½ hour period for 5 evenings during the week. This service has been put in place in the Altnagelvin base as Western Urgent Care have identified this base as having the highest demand. Supporting GPs in the Altnagelvin base to address current demands helps minimise the number of times that GPs in the other 4 centres in the Western area are moved from their respective centres.

As well as its core funding, Western Urgent Care has also been provided with additional funding in 2015/16 to support additional clinical capacity where greatest demand is identified during Out of Hours. Additional funding has also been made available to support more Bank Holiday clinical capacity, develop OOH skills mix and to respond to winter pressures, including the costs associated with a 'second Easter' occurring in the 2015/16 financial year.

Other initiatives and actions undertaken to support OOHs in the Western area have included actively seeking the support of GPs in the Western area to work a number of sessions in their local OOHs centre, liaising with members of the Local Medical Committee to encourage GPs to work out of hours in their local centre and recruiting more nursing staff to ensure that the pool of Nurse Advisors is sufficient to fill all telephone triage shifts.

Across Northern Ireland my Department and the Health and Social Care Board have been working with Out of Hours providers to address the challenges facing the service. In 2014/15, an additional £1.5m was invested to support the provision of GP Out of Hours services. Building on this, in 2015/16 an additional £3.1m has been made available to help build capacity in GP Out of Hours services. A further £1.1m has been made available to help out of hours providers meet increased demand for services over the winter months and the Easter period.

My Department has been leading a review of GP Out of Hours services across Northern Ireland. The review will identify good practice and opportunities to improve service provision within existing resources.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he intends to answer AQW 53146/11-16. (AQW 55343/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A response to AQW 53146 was issued on 19/03/2016.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of families bereaved by suicide that have requested support using the SD1 form process to link them to postvention services. (AQW 55348/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: A total of 460 families have requested suicide postvention support through the Sudden Death Notification (SD1) process.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of families that received postvention support services using the SD1 form process, within 48 hours of their request. (AQW 55349/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In accordance with good practice from other areas and based on feedback from bereaved families, commissioned services for bereavement support would generally not contact families within the initial 48 hours of receiving an SD1 form. In most cases it would be seven to ten days following a death that contact is made with families, with the offer of more support at a time when the family considers that they are ready/appropriate. If there is any indication that a family member wishes to be contacted earlier than this time period, this is followed up by the local service provider.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the criteria and threshold in terms of the number of suicides for instigating Emergency Community Response plans. (AQW 55351/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: There is no specific threshold or criteria, in terms of number of deaths, for the activation of a Community Response Plan. These plans are activated as a result of surveillance by health and social care professionals, PSNI and local communities following the sudden death of an individual or a number of individuals which gives rise for concern of a potential cluster, or where a death or deaths causes significant concern within a community.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made on the introduction of plain packaging for cigarette products. (AQW 55352/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: On 21 January 2015, the UK Government announced its decision to lay UK-wide regulations on standardised packaging within the current Parliament, subject to agreement from the Devolved Administrations.

First Minister and deputy First Minister consent to make regulations that would apply to Northern Ireland was granted on 2 February 2015. The draft regulations completed their passage through Parliament on 16 March 2015 and it is expected that the legislation will be commenced from May 2016, to coincide with implementation of the Revised EU Tobacco Products Directive.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of compliance with the new regulations on the display of tobacco products at the point of sale.

(AQW 55353/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Legislation banning the display of tobacco products at point of sale came into operation for large shops in October 2012 and for small shops (under 280 square metres) in April 2015.

District Councils are responsible for enforcing the ban and have indicated that, in general, compliance with the legislation is high.

In total, 6 prosecutions have been successfully taken by District Councils. These have all been as a result of displays of tobacco products to children during test purchase exercises.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for those waiting on ENT appointments, to detail (a) the waiting times; (b) the number of children waiting; and (c) where appointments take place in the Western Health and Social Trust.

(AQW 55360/11-16)

Mr Hamilton:

- (a) Information on the waiting times, in weeks, for those patients waiting on ENT appointments in the Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, as at 29th February 2016 is shown in the table below.

	Number of patients waiting, in weeks, for an ENT appointment					Total Waiting
	0 - 9	>9 - 18	>18 - 26	>26 - 52	>52	
ENT	1,476	1,080	239	59	0	2,854

Source: Western HSC Trust

1 The ENT waiting list includes patients waiting for Consultant Led, GPSI and Nurse led services.

- (b) At 29th February 2016, there were 822 children under the age of 16 years waiting for an ENT appointment in the Western HSC Trust.
- (c) Patients are seen at a site nearest to their residence and of their choice. The Western HSC Trust, as a multi hospital organisation, may offer appointments to patients at any of their sites to ensure best timely care.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 52846/11-16, for an update on the recruitment of a Consultant Physician in care of the elderly at the Causeway Hospital.

(AQW 55370/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Trust re-advertised in February 2016, without success. A locum consultant with competence in Care of the Elderly remains in place.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55406/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Details of the expenditure on external consultancy for the Department and for its arm's length bodies from 2011/12 to 2014/15 are provided in the table below:

Body	Title	External Consultancy Expenditure by Financial Year (£k)				
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
DHSSPS	Core Department	121	30	143	227	521
BSO	Business Services Organisation	85	54	32	2	173
HSCB	Health & Social Care Board	139	667	485	19	1310
NIAS	NI Ambulance Service	22	2	-	-	24
NIFRS	NI Fire & Rescue Service	5	5	11	30	51

Body	Title	External Consultancy Expenditure by Financial Year (£k)				
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
PHA	Public Health Agency	56	-	27	17	100
RQIA	Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority	13	-	-	-	13
SBNI	Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland	-	-	-	37	37
BHSCT	Belfast Trust	4	-	8	18	30
NHSCT	Northern Trust	102	16	11	36	165
SHSCT	Southern Trust	18	9	-	-	27
SEHSCT	South Eastern Trust	-	27	-	-	27
WHSC	Western Trust	2	-	-	-	2

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding of figures. These figures are recorded by Financial Year.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the reason for each time the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service were called to and attended the site at Craigavon Area Hospital in the last twelve months. (AQW 55412/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire Service confirmed they attended the site at Craigavon Area Hospital on 68 occasions in the last twelve months:

- 56 False Alarms
- 3 Mobilisations that were not false alarms but required no action
- 1 Vehicle incident
- 1 Hazardous materials incident
- 1 Suicide/Attempted suicide
- 3 Building – Non Residential
- 1 Building – Other Residential
- 1 Incident involving grassland or woodland
- 1 Casualties - Other

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of times the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Services have been called on site at Craigavon Area Hospital in the last twelve months. (AQW 55413/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have been mobilised to the Craigavon Area Hospital on 68 occasions in the last 12 months.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the receipt of direct payments in the (i) Northern and (ii) Western Health and Social Care Trusts; and to detail the proportion of direct payments that have not been awarded within the target timeframe.

(AQW 55415/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Guidance covering the provision and receipt of direct payments for all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust areas can be accessed via the following link: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/direct_payments_legislation_and_guidance_for_boards_and_trusts.pdf

The Northern and Western HSC Trusts have confirmed that they are not aware of any problems or delays with regard to the provision of direct payments in their areas.

There is no target timeframe for the provision of a direct payment; if an individual requests a direct payment and the HSC Trust is content that the assessed eligible needs can be met via the provision of a direct payment, the payment is approved and issued as soon as all conditions of the agreed arrangement have been met.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's policy on direct payments for the care of (i) children; and (ii) adults.

(AQW 55416/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Policy covering access and administration of direct payments for the care of all individuals is articulated in overarching guidance issued to the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts; accessible via the following link: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/direct_payments_legislation_and_guidance_for_boards_and_trusts.pdf

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the independent advocacy services his Department funds.

(AQW 55417/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: My Department provides revenue funding to Voice of Children and Young People in Care (VOYPIC), which provides a regional advocacy service for children and young people in care or who are care-experienced, to help them find out about their rights, enable them to make choices about the services they are entitled to receive, and to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

In 2015/16, the revenue grant to VOYPIC was £54,905.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will be in a position to make an announcement on the future of the Lifeline service.

(AQW 55418/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: I am still considering the options for the new model of the Lifeline service and will make an announcement shortly.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will issue guidance to ensure all tests for Group B Streptococcus GBS use the Enriched Culture Medium Test.

(AQW 55423/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: In June 2015, Public Health England (PHE) published the paper 'Enriched culture medium test for group B streptococcus infection: position paper' in response to requests to introduce the ECM test into NHS laboratories. The paper concluded that within current accepted clinical guidelines, there are no indications for testing women using enriched culture medium methods.

UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (SMIs) have been developed for laboratories. They provide clinicians with information about the available test repertoire and the standard of laboratory services they should expect for the investigation of infection in their patients. In using SMIs, laboratories should also take account of local requirements and undertake additional investigations where appropriate. The SMI B58: Detection of carriage of Group B Streptococci was updated in June 2015 and is consistent with the position on the ECM test and the current screening policy.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the need to introduce a local screening programme for Group B Streptococcus carriage for all expectant mothers, as part of a strategy to reduce Group B Streptococcus infection rates in newborn babies.

(AQW 55424/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Screening for Group B Streptococcus (GBS) has been considered by the UK National Screening Committee (NSC), an expert body that advises the four UK Health Departments on screening programmes. Following their most recent review of the evidence in 2012 the NSC re-affirmed its advice that screening for GBS should not be offered. This is because there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the benefits to be gained from screening all pregnant women and treating those carrying the organism with intravenous antibiotics during labour would outweigh the harms.

The NSC is currently undertaking an update review of the evidence for antenatal screening for GBS. I will consider any advice from the NSC when available.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given Northern Ireland has higher rates of Group B Streptococcus infection in babies than the rest of the UK, for his assessment of whether there is a need to undertake a cost benefit analysis of the risks or benefits of adopting a screening based approach, rather than a risk based approach to Group B Streptococcus prevention in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 55425/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Screening for GBS has been considered by the UK National Screening Committee (NSC), an expert body that advises the four UK Health Departments on screening programmes. Following their most recent review of the evidence in 2012, the NSC re-affirmed its advice that screening for GBS should not be offered. This is because there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the benefits to be gained from screening all pregnant women and treating those carrying the organism with intravenous antibiotics during labour would outweigh the harms. When reviewing the evidence of screening for any condition, the NSC will consider the costs and benefits of introducing a screening programme for that condition.

The NSC is currently undertaking an update review of any new evidence on screening for GBS. I will consider any advice from the NSC when available.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Maternity Hand Held Record in Northern Ireland identifies a woman's waters to have been broken for more than 24 hours as a neonatal Group B Streptococcus infection risk factor, when the Royal College of Gynaecologists and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines specify 18 hours as the threshold; and for his assessment of whether this disparity increases the risk of babies developing Group B Streptococcus infections.

(AQW 55426/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Health Agency regularly updates the Maternity Hand Held Record (MHHR). The first workshop to review the MHHR for this year's update was held in Antrim on 24 February 2016.

Department officials are part of the review group and new guidance about Group B Streptococcus in pregnancy will be considered as part of the review and update.

This disparity poses no additional risk for babies developing Group B Streptococcus. All pregnant women in Northern Ireland are given their own hand held maternity record so that they have access to their maternity notes and records throughout their pregnancy. It is an information tool used to assist in the communication between a pregnant woman and health professionals involved in her care. Health professionals will adhere to national clinical guidelines with regards to treatment and care of all women during and after pregnancy.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the support and treatment services available to young people aged 12-25 years in North Down, that are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

(AQW 55431/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, a range of alcohol and drug services for all age groups are commissioned from a number of providers by the Public Health Agency in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area. Services include:

- Connections Service – substance misuse awareness and community support;
- the Low Threshold Harm Reduction Project;
- Substance Advice Centre for adults (18 plus);
- the youth treatment/support service;
- a One Stop Shop Service;
- a school based harm reduction project; and
- targeted education and prevention programmes for young people.

In addition, SEHSCT's Addictions Service provides a range of interventions for adults, aged 18 years and over, residing in the Trust area who are dependent on alcohol or/and other drugs. The service sits within the Mental Health programme of care and is multi-disciplinary in nature, comprising of doctors, nurses and social workers across a range of Tier 2, 3 and 4 services as follows:

- Tier 2: Alcohol Liaison Service for the Ulster, Down & Lagan Valley Hospitals and a Health Development Officer who provides education, prevention and training service.
- Tier 3: Core Community Alcohol/Drug Teams in Down, Lisburn, North Down and Ards, Dual Diagnosis Service, Benzodiazepine Service, Substitute Prescribing service.
- Tier 4: Inpatient treatment service offers a 4-week intensive group therapy programme in addition to briefer admissions for assessment, detoxification and stabilisation according to individual need and is provided 7 days a week. Admission to the unit is usually planned and arranged through the Tier 3 Community Addictions Service.

Dedicated substance misuse workers are also based within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for those aged under 18 who have mental health and substance misuse issues.

SEHSCT also manages a Big Lottery- funded scheme, "Alcohol and You" via a contractual arrangement with local voluntary sector agencies, providing a range of advice, information, screening and brief interventions.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of the Community Resuscitation Strategy, including the resources have been allocated to the strategy.

(AQW 55450/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following the publication of the Strategy, my Department requested the establishment of a regional implementation group to take forward the actions set out in the Strategy. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) chairs this group.

The group has identified a number of work streams and progress on these is being taken forward by a number of sub groups. To date work has included engaging with a range of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training providers and supporting and facilitating the introduction of public access defibrillators by a number of organisations.

Significant effort and resources are already invested in training across Northern Ireland. One of the objectives of the strategy is to increase the number of people, of all ages, trained in CPR skills by making the best use of the available resources through better co-ordination and use of existing services.

An action arising from this objective is: "The Health and Social Care Board will commission a model of community resuscitation (CR) which through partnership working will provide a range of CR training programmes, including training in emergency life support (ELS), suitable for different settings e.g. workplaces, schools and community settings." An investment proposal prepared by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service for a regional team of Community Resuscitation Development Officers (CRDOs) has been developed. This is now being considered by my Department along with the other competing resource pressures.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of units of blood (a) donated; and (b) disposed of in each of the last five years, broken down by blood type.

(AQW 55452/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The number of units of blood donated within Northern Ireland by blood type in each of the last five years is provided in the table below.

Financial Year	Donated								
	A-	A+	B-	B+	O-	O+	AB-	AB+	Total
2011/12	3,872	14,884	1,227	4,853	8,201	24,751	379	1,387	59,554
2012/13	3,769	14,835	1,183	4,611	7,626	23,906	367	1,267	57,564
2013/14	3,688	14,319	1,207	4,636	7,369	22,865	334	1,305	55,723
2014/15	3,407	13,786	1,168	4,560	7,483	22,111	369	1,247	54,131
2015/16*	3,085	12,219	1,068	4,044	6,708	20,013	324	1,148	48,609

Source: NIBTS

* Information provided for the 2015/16 financial year only includes donations until 14th March 2016.

The number of units of blood discarded within Northern Ireland by blood type in each of the last five years is provided in the table below.

Financial Year	Discarded								
	A-	A+	B-	B+	O-	O+	AB-	AB+	Total
2011/12	293	1,037	139	600	605	1,731	131	689	5,225
2012/13	301	903	147	645	466	1,648	113	526	4,749
2013/14	249	817	143	765	453	1,449	102	519	4,497
2014/15	247	804	164	834	394	1,217	139	530	4,329
2015/16*	218	850	102	441	351	1,061	101	483	3,607

Source: NIBTS

* Information provided for the 2015/16 financial year only includes donations until 14th March 2016.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the commissioning of services will operate after the abolition of the Health and Social Care Board.

(AQW 55453/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: On 15 December 2015, I launched a public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system, which includes my proposals to de-layer the existing system by moving away from the current commissioning model and closing down the Health and Social Care Board.

My Department is currently analysing the responses to the public consultation on reform of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system which closed on 12 February 2016. No decisions have yet been taken about how functions will operate in the future structure.

My Department will take account of the views of all relevant stakeholders and will be working closely with all HSC colleagues, including those in the HSCB, Trusts and Public Health Agency, in the coming months to define the best health and social care structures for Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of abortions that have been carried out in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55460/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of medical abortions carried out within HSC hospitals in Northern Ireland is published annually in the Termination of Pregnancy Statistics publication, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-termination-pregnancy-statistics-201415>

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) people on the Ophthalmology waiting list for cataract haze at the (a) Royal Victoria Hospital; (b) Mater Hospital; and (ii) surgery clinics held per month, in each of the last three years, to correct this eye problem.

(AQW 55475/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of people on the Ophthalmology waiting list for cataract haze at the Royal Victoria and Mater Hospitals; and the number of surgery clinics held per month to correct this problem is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether clinicians advising women of a positive Group B Streptococcus infection test result, explain the impact of this verbally to the patient, or if results are provided by post only.

(AQW 55476/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Four of the Health and Social Care Trusts inform pregnant women who have a positive Group B Streptococcus (GBS) result by telephone with a verbal explanation; this is followed up with a letter explaining the result. The fifth Trust informs the woman and her GP by letter. In addition further information is given to the woman at her next antenatal visit. All Trusts also give the women an information leaflet about GBS either via the post or at her next antenatal visit.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many newborn babies have been treated with antibiotics while still in hospital, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55478/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information is not collected centrally on the number of newborn babies treated with antibiotics while still in hospital.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the activities funded by his Department to promote drug awareness and prevention in North Down; and (ii) the cost of those activities.

(AQW 55479/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, the Public Health Agency has commissioned range of alcohol and drug education and awareness raising services that are available in the North Down area from a number of providers, as detailed below:

Service	Cost per annum
<p>One Stop Shop Service:</p> <p>The aim of One Stop Shop (OSS) services is to provide a youth friendly, holistic health and well-being service. They provide opportunities for young people to socialise in an alcohol and drug-free environment and avail of information, advice and support on a range of issues from relevant services both on-site and off-site, with the support of staff of the OSS. The service also delivers education awareness sessions and outreach activities in community based settings in youth facilities, schools and community centres.</p>	£130,000
<p>Targeted Prevention programmes:</p> <p>These programmes are delivered across the south eastern area and are targeted at vulnerable young people within the following age groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 11 to 13 years ■ 14 to 15 years ■ 16-21 years 	£57,735
<p>Drug and Alcohol Intervention Service for Young people:</p> <p>This service works holistically with young people aged across the south eastern area aged 11-25 years who have been identified as having substance misuse difficulties</p>	£174,613
<p>School Health Alcohol Harm Reduction programme:</p> <p>This is a teacher training programme for teachers to deliver a prevention and education programme to pupils in the majority of secondary schools across the Belfast and south eastern areas</p>	£87,473
<p>Talking About Tough Issues:</p> <p>This programme focuses on the delivery of parental awareness programmes across the Belfast and south eastern areas highlighting risks around drug and alcohol and developing strategies to address these issues.</p>	

Service	Cost per annum
<p>Connections Service:</p> <p>This service supports the work of the South Eastern Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team. The team has prioritised the need to promote drug awareness and prevention across the area.</p>	£119,500
<p>In addition to the specific services mentioned above, there are a range of generic health and wellbeing organisations that would also address drug and alcohol prevention issues.</p> <p>All drug and alcohol treatment and support services also provide an element of education, awareness raising and prevention, though the funding for this element of their work cannot be disaggregated from their total budget.</p>	'In Kind'

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on any support his Department can provide to protect the services delivered by FASA.

(AQW 55493/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Over the past 20 years, FASA has played an important role in preventing and addressing substance misuse, and also in supporting individuals, families and communities to deal with its consequences. I am well aware of the good work undertaken by FASA staff in dealing with crisis response and other important issues, and it saddens me to hear of the difficulties currently being faced by this organisation. My Department has not previously and does not currently provide any direct funding to FASA.

I understand officials from the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Belfast Trust and other funders are engaging with members of the FASA Board to discuss options on how to manage the various contracts and services that FASA currently holds with the Health and Social Care Sector. Clearly the key focus has to be on ensuring those clients currently engaged with FASA continue to be managed appropriately. I further understand that measures are currently being put in place to refer high risk clients to the Belfast Trust, and that other clients are being signposted and referred to other appropriate services, with clients' GPs also being informed where necessary.

The PHA, Belfast Trust and others remain supportive of future options for the organisation in order to maintain services at a local level if at all possible. They are also looking at other options to maintain service provision in the area.

Given the rapidly developing nature of the situation, I have asked the Public Health Agency to continue to update me on how it is managing the continuation of services and the affected client base going forward.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what steps he has taken to increase Dialectical Behaviour Therapy provision in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 55503/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Following the completion of the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) pilot the Western Health and Social Care Trust has been working in partnership with the Beacon Centre (NIAMH) to deliver preparatory workshops to all those on the Trust waiting list for DBT. These will run during April and May in both sectors of the Trust.

Two DBT programmes are planned (1 in the Northern sector and 1 in the Southern sector) on completion of the preparatory workshops. Two part time DBT therapists have been recruited and are awaiting starting dates.

Subject to additional funding the Trust aim to further develop the DBT service, increase the pool of professionals who can facilitate the skills component of the DBT programme and ensure DBT becomes an integral part of the PD care pathway.

Mr Diver asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in Western Health and Social Care Trust have a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder.

(AQW 55504/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have given blood in North Down, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 55513/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: During the 2015/16 financial year, a total of 2,451 people have given blood in the North Down area (1st April 2015 – 16th March 2016).

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many blood donation events took place in North Down in the last twelve months

(AQW 55514/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: During the 2015/16 financial year, a total of 24 blood donation sessions have taken place in the North Down area (1st April 2015 – 16th March 2016).

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he can take to help resolve the difficulties experienced by FASA.

(AQW 55517/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Over the past 20 years, FASA has played an important role in preventing and addressing substance misuse, and also in supporting individuals, families and communities to deal with its consequences. I am well aware of the good work undertaken by FASA staff in dealing with crisis response and other important issues, and it saddens me to hear of the difficulties currently being faced by this organisation. My Department has not previously and does not currently provide any direct funding to FASA.

I understand officials from the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Belfast Trust and other funders are engaging with members of the FASA Board to discuss options on how to manage the various contracts and services that FASA currently holds with the Health and Social Care Sector. Clearly the key focus has to be on ensuring those clients currently engaged with FASA continue to be managed appropriately. I further understand that measures are currently being put in place to refer high risk clients to the Belfast Trust, and that other clients are being signposted and referred to other appropriate services, with clients' GPs also being informed where necessary.

The PHA, Belfast Trust and others remain supportive of future options for the organisation in order to maintain services at a local level if at all possible. They are also looking at other options to maintain service provision in the area.

Given the rapidly developing nature of the situation, I have asked the Public Health Agency to continue to update me on how it is managing the continuation of services and the affected client base going forward.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 54527/11-16, for his assessment of the impact that proposed changes to variable crewing arrangements at Coleraine Fire and Rescue Station will have on their ability to meet Retained Duty System availability targets.

(AQW 55518/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service proposals for changes to crewing arrangements at 11 fire stations including Coleraine were out for Public Consultation between 14 December 2015 and 7 March 2016.

It is the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service view that the proposals if implemented will rebalance resources appropriately and proportionately to address the level of risk across Northern Ireland. The continued safety of the public and of firefighters remains a priority.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many cancer patients are receiving treatment in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) how many have been referred to a hospital outside the constituency for treatment.

(AQW 55537/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of cancer patients that are receiving treatment in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and the number that have been referred to a hospital outside the constituency for treatment is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people on waiting lists for a first consultant led appointment for Multiple Sclerosis, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 55538/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: Reason for referral, or confirmed diagnosis, is not collected for those patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment. Therefore it is not possible to separately identify the number of patients with Multiple Sclerosis waiting for a first appointment with a consultant neurologist.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what discussions he has had with his Executive colleagues to address regional health inequalities.

(AQW 55567/11-16)

Mr Hamilton: 'Making Life Better' is the Executive's strategic framework for public health which aims to achieve better health and wellbeing for everyone and reduce inequalities in health.

As part of the structures for implementation, the Executive agreed to establish a Ministerial Committee for Public Health, chaired by the Minister for Health. This Committee met on Tuesday 23rd February 2016.

Department of Justice

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to list the incidents of attacks on prison officers inside Northern Ireland prisons in each of the last three years.

(AQW 55167/11-16)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The table below shows the number of assaults reported on prison officers in each prison in each of the last three years.

No of Staff Assaults

	2013	2014	2015
Maghaberry Prison	66	63	52
Magilligan Prison	6	6	6
Hydebank Wood	22	38	40

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the current threat to members of the (i) Prison Service; and (ii) security services in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 55214/11-16)

Mr Ford: The overall threat to Northern Ireland Prison Service staff in Northern Ireland remains severe, meaning an attack is highly likely. This threat level covers staff working at all prison establishments in Northern Ireland.

The threat to the PSNI in Northern Ireland is also currently severe.

The threat relating to the security and intelligence services is not a matter for my Department.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what legislation applies to the theft of lead fittings from buildings.

(AQW 55271/11-16)

Mr Ford: The Theft Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 applies to all instances of theft, including the items to which you refer.

Depending on circumstances the Theft (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 may also apply.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice whether security warnings issued by the Northern Ireland Prison Service are given a reference number and year of issue.

(AQW 55288/11-16)

Mr Ford: All confidential security warnings issued to prison staff are archived on NIPS document management system. They are given a unique reference number which indicates the year of issue.

I do not comment on the security measures that are provided to individual members of staff.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice whether new recruits to the Prison Service over the last four years have been provided with security measures including vests and mirrors to check under vehicles.

(AQW 55290/11-16)

Mr Ford: All confidential security warnings issued to prison staff are archived on NIPS document management system. They are given a unique reference number which indicates the year of issue.

I do not comment on the security measures that are provided to individual members of staff.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the need for a new build at HMP Magilligan; and what conversations he has had with the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding capital funding availability for a new build.

(AQW 55330/11-16)

Mr Ford: I consider the construction of a new prison at Magilligan essential to enable NIPS to deliver the requisite programmes to address re-offending behaviour; to meet Disability Discrimination Act standards; and to replace the existing infrastructure, which has outlived its useful life and is expensive and inefficient to staff, maintain and operate.

An outline business case for the Redevelopment of Magilligan Prison was approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel in January 2015.

I met with the then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, in April 2015 to emphasise the importance of securing funding for the Redevelopment of Magilligan Project. However Mr Hamilton was unable to give any commitment to funding until longer term capital budgets have been agreed by the Executive.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice when he will publish the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy.

(AQW 55411/11-16)

Mr Ford: On 15 March I published the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy jointly with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following Executive approval.

A copy of the Strategy together with a young people's version can be accessed on my Department's website at the following addresses:

- <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/stopping-domestic-sexual-violence-ni.pdf>
- <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/young-persons-version.pdf>

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies have spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55467/11-16)

Mr Ford: External consultancy expenditure by my Department is included in the Annual Compliance Report on the Use of External Consultants which is published annually by the Department of Finance and Personnel and is available on their web site www.dfpni.gov.uk.

The table below shows the expenditure on external consultancy by my Department and its arm's-length bodies from the 2011-12 to 2014-15 financial years. Figures for 2015-16 have not yet been compiled.

External Consultancy Expenditure £k

	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12
Department including Agencies	53	140	107	401
Police Service NI	0	44	148	54
NI Policing Board	10	11	0	40
Office of the Police Ombudsman NI	2	10	28	16
Probation Board NI	0	0	0	15
NI Legal Services Commission	0	0	6	3
Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust	0	0	2	0
Criminal Justice Inspection NI	4	7	8	0
Total	69	212	299	529

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the work of the Organised Crime Taskforce subgroup devoted to fuel fraud.

(AQW 55470/11-16)

Mr Ford: The cross border sub group devoted to fuel fraud is chaired by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) who are in the lead in relation to tackling excise evasion.

This group was instrumental in the introduction of the new marker, Accutrace™S10, which was introduced into UK fuel supplies on 1 April 2015. In tandem the Republic of Ireland introduced the marker into fuel supplies from 31 March 2015.

On 4 November 2015 HMRC placed in the House of Commons library their six monthly evaluation of the Accutrace™S10 Fuel Marker. While noting that it was early in the evaluation process and the data was not yet conclusive, all available evidence was pointing to an overall shift away from illicit laundering. A one year evaluation will be carried out in the near future.

Whilst this is positive news, not least because of the negative impact which fuel laundering waste has on the environment, HMRC are now working together with colleagues from the Republic of Ireland to develop a strategy to reduce the current emerging threat which is the smuggling of fuel.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice (i) how many; and (ii) what percentage of anti-social behaviour orders in North Down have been breached in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55597/11-16)

Mr Ford: There has been one anti-social behaviour order issued to a defendant from the North Down constituency over the last five years. This order, which was issued in 2012, has been breached.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to a weight restriction, excluding agricultural vehicles, on Bregagh Road, Ballymoney, to encourage coaches to avail of nearby parking facilities and protect the road from further damage.

(AQW 54707/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): There have been increasing numbers of visitors to this site both by private car and tour coaches. This has led to a number of issues being raised with my Department, mainly related to traffic and pedestrian management in the vicinity of the roads around 'The Dark Hedges'.

My officials are currently involved in discussions with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, The Dark Hedges Preservation Trust and other interested stakeholders regarding a number of matters including the possibility of prohibitions or restrictions on traffic along the Bregagh Road (The Dark Hedges).

The aim of these ongoing discussions is to bring forward a package of proposals encompassing the responsibilities of all the stakeholders, including my Department that will address the issues in an all-inclusive way.

I trust you will find the above information helpful.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many penalty charges were issued in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Portstewart; (iv) Portrush; and (v) Dungiven in (a) 2014; and (b) 2015.

(AQW 54987/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Please see the table below which contains details of the total number of both on-street and off-street Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in the towns and years requested:

Town	PCNs	
	2014	2015
Coleraine	4,213	4,090
Limavady	1,055	1,233
Portstewart	349	395
Portrush	461	529
Dungiven	8	0

The number of PCNs issued in any one town or area depends on many factors, including the size of the town, the extent of parking restrictions and the volume of traffic. These factors, plus the level of illegal parking, will influence where and how often Traffic Attendants are deployed.

Traffic Attendants will issue a PCN to any vehicle parked in contravention of a parking restriction however they must always afford drivers in or at their vehicle the opportunity to drive away before attempting enforcement. These factors, in combination with the varying levels of parking restrictions that require enforcing, are the primary reasons for the varying numbers of PCNs issued.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the A6 Dungiven to Derry dualling will commence at the Dungiven bypass and proceed westerly as funding becomes available.

(AQW 55078/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The indicative allocations for the 2017/18 – 2020/21 period will fund construction of part of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme. My Department is currently considering the extent of the scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, which could be delivered. It is envisaged that priority will be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development whether her Department plans to upgrade the road surface and footpaths in Finaghy.

(AQW 55113/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department plans to resurface a section of Kingsway, between Black's Road and the M1 Bridge during the 2016/17 financial year, subject to the availability of the necessary funding.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development, other than Belfast and Derry, where a scoping exercise or preparatory work has been undertaken on the use of public hire bicycles.

(AQW 55303/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department has been involved in no scoping exercises or preparatory work on the use of public hire bicycles outside of Belfast. However, the former Larne Borough Council submitted a bid for assistance to the Department under the 'Active Travel Demonstration Projects' competition in 2012 which involved a public bike hire scheme.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development how many landowners will be affected by development of the A6 at (i) Moneynick; (ii) Castledawson; (iii) the Dungiven bypass; (iv) Dungiven to Claudy; (vi) Claudy to Drumahoe; and (vii) Drumahoe to Maydown.

(AQW 55304/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: As you are aware there are currently proposals to construct a dual carriageway on two sections of the A6, these being from the end of the M22 at Randalstown to Castledawson, and from Londonderry to Dungiven.

The figures below relate to the numbers of agricultural and non-agricultural landowners affected by these schemes.

A6 Randalstown to Castledawson

(i) Randalstown to Toome (Moneynick)

Between Randalstown and Toome, approximately 40 landowners will be affected by the scheme. No landowners will be directly affected within Moneynick as the planned dual carriageway will be constructed to the south of the hamlet.

(ii) Toome to Castledawson

Approximately 86 landowners will be affected by this section of the scheme. This figure includes 27 landowners at Castledawson.

A6 Londonderry to Dungiven

(iii) Dungiven Bypass

Approximately 38 landowners will be affected by the scheme.

(iv) Dungiven to Claudy

Approximately 104 landowners will be affected by this section of the scheme.

(v) Claudy to Drumahoe

Approximately 83 landowners will be affected by this section of the scheme.

(vi) Drumahoe to Maydown

Approximately 41 landowners will be affected by this section of the scheme.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development why a number of trees have been felled adjacent to the M1 and A1 rather than pruned.

(AQW 55333/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The M1 motorway from Belfast to Sprucefield is maintained on behalf of my Department by Highway Management (City) Limited (HMG) under the DBFO Package 1 contract whilst the M1 from Sprucefield to Dungannon and the A1 from Sprucefield to the border are maintained by Amey Roads NI Limited (ARNI) under the DBFO Package 2 contract. The DBFO Companies are responsible for all aspects of maintenance of their respective networks including responsibility for landscape management.

Both companies have commissioned Specialist Arboriculturist Consultants to carry out detailed inspections of the trees on, and adjacent to, their respective road networks to assess the risk of potential tree failures that could lead to serious personal injury or property damage. In each case the intention is to develop and implement a programme of general tree maintenance, pruning and, where necessary, removal.

On the advice of their consultants, both DBFO Companies have taken steps to begin removal of those trees or groups of trees identified as being at high risk of falling either because of disease or instability.

It is likely that more trees will have to be removed and further pruning carried out as the tree maintenance programmes are developed. However, replanting with appropriate replacement species will also form part of these programmes.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 54423/11-16, what procedure was used to restrict access to Woodburn Forest; and whether this was consulted on prior to a decision being made.

(AQW 55364/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: As I advised in my previous answer to AQW 54423/11-16, the land at Woodburn Forest is owned by NI Water and there is no public right of way over the land. As with all land owned by the Company, it has a duty to the public, under the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, to ensure their safety.

Therefore, the Company may withdraw, or restrict, access to its land when works, or other activities, are being carried out which may have a health and safety risk to members of the public, without any requirement for consultation.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how much (i) her Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55404/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department and its arm's-length bodies have spent a total of £3,070k on external consultancy since May 2011 to December 2015. This can be broken down as follows:

- i. Department for Regional Development (including TransportNI) - £1,176k
- ii. Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company - £708k
- iii. Northern Ireland Water - £1,186k

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 54318/11-16, whether information about how to access all photographic evidence in relation to a Penalty Charge Notice is issued to the person concerned when the initial PCN is issued, during the discount period, or after the discount period expires.

(AQW 55410/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Information on how to access all photographic evidence in relation to a PCN is issued to the person concerned within the Notice to Owner document. This is a document which is automatically sent to registered vehicle keepers after their discount period has expired who either fail to challenge, fail to pay or choose to make further representations to my Department.

Photographs are already attached to PCNs issued to registered vehicle keepers for Moving Traffic Offences in bus lanes.

As stated previously, my Department continuously seeks opportunities to improve the provision of information to members of the public. Such an opportunity has arisen as part of the rebranding exercise in preparation for the transition to the new Department for Infrastructure. New rebranded PCN stationary, expected to be introduced this summer, will include additional information about how to view contravention photographs online.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the rationale for the use of bilingual manhole covers as part of the public realm scheme in Ballymena.

(AQW 55463/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The Ballymena Public Realm Scheme is a Mid and East Antrim Council led scheme funded by the Department of Social Development and being delivered by the contractor TAL Ltd.

My Department has had no involvement in the sourcing of materials for the scheme.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the measured footfall in each town with a population of more than 10,000.

(AQW 55472/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The information requested is not available within my Department.

The British Retail Consortium/Springboard Retail Footfall and Vacancies Monitor (FVM) gathers data on customer activity in town and city centre locations, and in out of town shopping locations, throughout the UK using the latest generation automated technology.

The FVM records approximately 62 million footfall counts per week at over 500 different shopping locations in 152 towns and cities across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Monitor covers the main centre in each nation/region and a representative sample of secondary and smaller town centres.

The Monitor provides the only available measures of the performance of town centre and out of town shopping locations in the UK.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of Smartlink cards issued by Translink in each of the last five years.

(AQW 55473/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The number of Smartlink cards issued by Translink in each of the last five years is contained in the table below:

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Metro Multi Journey	22,452	20,587	20,172	20,284	20,069	19,331
Metro Travelcard	5,117	5,710	5,489	7,047	7,204	7,743
Ulsterbus Multi Journey	19,853	21,156	23,565	24,635	24,842	23,202

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Ulsterbus Travelcard	4,541	2,495	1,677	1,664	1,776	1,380
Total	51,963	49,948	50,903	53,630	53,891	51,656

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether TransportNI will ensure that the damage done to roads in the Loughgiel area due to heavy construction traffic will be repaired.

(AQW 55491/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: I am aware that the roads in and around Loughgiel are currently being used to service a number of construction projects in the area. I am also cognisant of the issues, and the concerns of local residents, as a consequence of the increased heavy construction traffic in the vicinity. As you will know, heavy construction traffic has a more significant detrimental impact upon the carriageway than normal vehicular traffic. Therefore, to minimise disruption to the network and ensure any arising damage is repaired in an expeditious manner, my Department has collaborated with the developers, from an early stage, to assist in managing the network in the area.

Subsequently, I am pleased to advise you the developers have agreed, in consultation with my Department, to adhering to specific haulage routes. These routes, developed in partnership with all parties, have been designed to ensure that developers can deliver their projects, whilst also ensuring both minimal conflict between heavy construction traffic and to ensure the level of road usage by these vehicles is appropriately managed. In addition, where a road has been designated as part of a haulage route, the inspection frequency of that road has been increased above normal requirements. This provides further assurance that any defects occurring on these routes will be identified more rapidly than other similar roads on the network which are subject to normal traffic flows.

In addition to agreeing these routes, a number of the developers have also agreed to, where it can be demonstrated that they are the sole construction operator using the road for haulage, at their own expense, to undertake any remedial works required to ensure the road remains fit for purpose.

Finally, I would advise, any other defects occurring on the road network around Loughgiel, which cannot be attributed to the construction works in the area, will continue to be inspected and maintained in accordance with my Department's inspection regimes and road safety maintenance standards.

I trust that you find this response reassuring, insofar that my Department is not only maintaining the road network within its budgetary allocation, but is also, where possible, actively liaising with private sector contractors to assist with road maintenance where it can be clearly demonstrated that their works have perniciously affected on the road network.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on fixing the potholes in Orchardville, South Belfast.
(AQW 55528/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: The footways and carriageway in the Orchardville area are inspected by my officials on a 16 week cyclical basis and anything which is considered to be hazardous to the public is identified and programmed for repair.

Orchardville Avenue was last inspected on 15 December 2015 and a number of defects were noted. These defects have since been repaired.

The most recent inspection of Orchardville Crescent and Orchardville Gardens was carried out on 11 February 2016 and a number of defects were identified. It is expected that these defects will be repaired by the end of March 2016.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development whether she has any plans to extend the Sheepbridge Park and Share facility near Newry.

(AQW 55580/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: As indicated in my response to your oral question (AQO 9692/11-16 refers), my Department is keen to introduce measures which promote park and ride and park and share to help reduce congestion on the road network.

Following on from the success of the Park and Share facility at Sheepbridge, Newry which is currently oversubscribed, I asked my officials to investigate this site to determine if additional capacity can be added. I can confirm that initial designs are now complete and that estimates are currently being carried out with a view to establishing any viable options.

This will be followed by an assessment of priority of individual locations in the context of my Department's wider review of the Park and Ride Delivery Programme. Successful schemes must then complete any required statutory processes such as Planning Permission and then compete for funding in the Park and Ride Park and Share Delivery Programme before delivery can take place.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many claims for vehicle or tyre damage were submitted to Transport NI from 1 April 2015 to 29 Feb 2016 in each divisional area; (ii) how many of the claims in each area were accepted and payments made; and (iii) how much has been paid for damage in each divisional area during this period.

(AQW 55596/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department thoroughly investigates every claim for compensation that it receives to establish whether or not it has a defence to the allegations. Claims received by my Department in a financial year are not always concluded in the same financial year. This is because, inter alia, claims which are rejected may result in legal proceedings being issued.

Table 1 below details the number of vehicle damage claims received by TransportNI (including claims for tyre damage) for the period 1 April 2015 to 29 Feb 2016 in each divisional area.

Table 1 – Vehicle Damage Claims Received¹

	Claims Received
Eastern	290
Northern	291
Southern	653
Western	408
Total	1,642

Table 2 below details the number of claims settled and the compensation paid in relation to vehicle damage in each divisional area over the same period. Table 2 includes settlements and compensation payments pertaining to claims received in prior financial years as explained above.

Table 2 – Vehicle Damage Claims Settled and Compensation Paid²

	Claims Settled	Compensation Paid
Eastern	89	£28,514
Northern	108	£39,157
Southern	196	£53,755
Western	162	£37,667
Total	555	£159,093

- 1 Claims received in a financial year are not always concluded in the same financial year.
- 2 Claims settled and compensation paid in a financial year may relate to claims received in prior years.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development what classes of taxi will be permitted to access Belfast bus lanes in line with the new taxi regulations becoming operative on 31 May 2016; and when guidance will be published and transmitted to the local taxi industry.

(AQW 55607/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: Currently two types of taxi are permitted to use bus lanes during their hours of operation where this is indicated on the adjacent bus lane signs. These are Belfast Public Hire Taxis which operate under a yellow plate, and Taxi-Bus services which operate under a white-and-blue plate. Both are permitted access because they operate in a similar fashion to public transport - in that they are permitted to be hailed and pick up passengers on the street.

Department of Environment legislation, The Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, will come into operation on 31 May 2016. This legislation will change the taxi licensing definitions to Class A, B, C or D. This change requires my Department to amend bus lane orders accordingly. As part of this process, my Department will consider which classes of taxi will in future be permitted to use bus lanes.

I have therefore asked that a study be carried out to determine the impact that taxis using bus lanes would have on bus journey times and gauge the potential impact of the new taxi classes on the operation of bus lanes.

I will announce my decision when these studies are complete and have been fully considered.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what traffic calming measures her Department has considered at St Patrick's College and St Canice Primary School on Curragh Road, Dungiven.

(AQW 55611/11-16)

Miss M McIlveen: My Department's TransportNI has introduced a number of traffic management measures on the Curragh Road in the vicinity of the schools and playground towards the end of last year. New yellow backed school warning signs along with red surfacing and 30mph roundels have been put in place.

An assessment of all primary schools within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area for the upgrading of existing, or providing new Safer Routes to School flashing signs, including 20mph signage, is in the process of being carried out.

St Patrick's College and St Canice's Primary School were assessed as part of that process and found to be in the lower echelon of the 73 assessments completed to date.

Department for Social Development

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development whether it is normal practice for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to rehouse a family due to the property not being fit for human habitation and then place a new tenant in that property without completing the necessary improvements that had initially meant it was not fit for habitation.

(AQW 55012/11-16)

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has advised that it would not be normal practice for them to let properties, which are unfit for human habitation. When a dwelling has been allocated to a new tenant the Housing Executive will complete health and safety checks (gas and electricity etc) and also complete appropriate new tenancy repairs to bring the property up to a suitable letting standard before the tenancy is commenced.

All new tenants are also given a copy of the tenancy agreement called the General Conditions of Tenancy. The agreement lists the landlord's and tenant's responsibility in relation to the tenancy and it includes information in relation to maintenance and repairs to the property.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of tenants that have been housed in properties within 3-6 months of the previous tenant needing to be rehomed due to the property not being fit for habitation, in each calendar year since 2011.

(AQW 55013/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The information is not available in the format requested for both Housing Executive and Housing Association properties because there are no figures available for NIHE properties and Housing Associations would not generally hold time-series data of this level of detail.

However, both the Housing Executive and Housing Associations would inspect and carry out any necessary repairs and renewal work before a new tenant would move in.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 44130/11-15, for an updated position on when housing associations tendered for the maintenance of heating systems.

(AQW 55018/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below provides an update of when Housing Association tendered for the maintenance of heating systems.

Housing Association	Last tender for maintenance of heating systems
Abbeyfield & Wesley	November 2013
Alpha	Retendered and contract commenced 1 February 2016
Apex	Retendered and contract commenced 1 February 2016
Ark	October 2015
Choice Ireland	Currently retendering following amalgamation 4 Housing Associations
Clanmil	November 2013
Connswater	New contract commenced February 2015
Craigowen	June 2015
Fold	Retendered and contract commenced 1 February 2016
Grove	October 2015
Habinteg	Retendered and contract commenced 1 February 2016
Hearth	November 2013
Helm	Tendered May 2014, contract awarded July 2014
Newington	August 2015
North Belfast	October 2015
Rural	October 2015
South Ulster	June 2015
St. Matthews	October 2015
Triangle/Covenanter	Retendered & new contract commenced 1 February 2016
Woodvale & Shankill	Not applicable as the contract is carried out by Direct Labour Team within Association

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the procurement groups that Housing Associations were involved in; and whether he will promote a strengthening of the associations through mergers being encouraged or forced, to increase housing output and address housing need.

(AQW 55060/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department carried out a review of the Social Housing Development Programme Procurement Strategy last year and a number of changes of approach have been introduced. While the Department is keen to see collaboration between associations on procurement as a means of increasing procurement capacity and efficiencies within the Housing Association movement, it is no longer mandating that associations operate within existing procurement groups. Rather, associations will be given greater freedom to collaborate based on a natural alignment of shared interests.

In tandem, the Department is keen more of a sector-led approach to procurement and has invited the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations to work with its members on developing proposals for how this could be delivered.

As independent organisations, any decisions relating to proposed mergers of housing associations rests with the individual housing associations concerned and I have no role in forcing mergers. However, as the regulatory authority, my Department must approve any proposed mergers and ensure that proper process is followed.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much surplus land his Department sold in the 2015-16 financial year; and its location.

(AQW 55151/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below provides details of how much surplus land was sold within DSD in 2015- date, and its location.

Location	Amount £'000
Portadown	3,676
Ballymena	1,250
Antrim	444
Belfast	275
Total	5,642

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what powers he has to ensure that housing associations maintain their housing stock to a suitable condition and standard.

(AQW 55171/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Association Guide sets out the Department's guidelines for Registered Housing Associations requiring robust policy and procedural standards across all Associations and equitable quality service provision.

The DSD Housing Regulatory Inspection Team carry out periodical inspections on registered Housing Association's to ensure compliance with procedures laid down in the Housing Association Guide. Failure to comply with the Guide will result in the suspension of payment of grant from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Development Programme Group) provided by DSD.

Where the inspection reveals continuous failure, failure of a serious nature or if it considers there has been misconduct or mismanagement, the Department may invoke the powers under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 to initiate an Inquiry.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of Housing Executive rent goes back into the maintenance budget.

(AQW 55172/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that during 2014/15:

- The Revenue Maintenance budget amounted to 50.3% of rental income; and
- In addition £15.8m (5.5%) of rental income was transferred to reserves to fund capital investment programmes, including the Interim Investment Plan.

The Housing Executive noted that in this response:

- The definition of 'Revenue Maintenance' includes response, grounds, general, planned maintenance and the costs of the Direct Labour Organisation.
- Internal administration/ staffing costs, required to plan, procure, oversee and inspect maintenance, are not included in the definition of Revenue Maintenance expenditure.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how the needs of vulnerable adults that are Northern Ireland Housing Executive customers are (i) assessed; (ii) identified; and (iii) met, to ensure they are safeguarded.

(AQW 55217/11-16)

Lord Morrow: When any person approaches the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) for a service, whether it's a new housing applicant or an existing tenant, staff will assess their housing associated needs and advise on or recommend further support if this is deemed necessary for the person/family and their housing circumstances. Often, when the needs are more complex, or staff are not qualified to assist, the issue will be referred directly to the individual's GP or Social Worker. Housing Executive staff are aware that it is part of their role to ensure that those organisations that have a responsibility to help people who are vulnerable are informed as appropriate.

Safeguarding vulnerable people is a high priority for the Housing Executive and it has policies and procedures in place to address this. The policies and procedures are communicated to Housing Executive staff in a number of ways and a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers have been appointed, in a range of locations, to give direct access for staff members who need advice, support or who wish to make referrals to Social Services and or the PSNI.

Many of the NIHE's services are provided to assist vulnerable adults, such as homelessness services and services provided through the Supporting People Programme. While these services are not normally delivered directly by NIHE but through external providers, NIHE ensures that the providers have appropriate policies in place, that they communicate them effectively to staff and that they are properly enforced.

The Housing Executive's policies on Safeguarding clearly state that any organisation, that acts as an agent for the Housing Executive, or provides services for the Housing Executive, on the basis of an agreement or contract, must have Safeguarding policies and procedures that are of an equivalent standard to the Housing Executive's. This provision is supported by contractual documentation and the offer of training provided by the NIHE to the service provider/contractor.

Providers funded through the Supporting People programme are not legally contractors or consultants. Rather, the Supporting People funding agreements create an independent funding relationship which is not analogous to an employer/contractor relationship. The Housing Executive use the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to assess and validate the quality of service, of which a core objective requires providers to have robust policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and protecting adults and children, that they have been reviewed in the last three years and, are in accordance with current legislation.

The obligation for vetting employees lies with the service provider. This responsibility remains with the recipient of the funding agreement, regardless of whether or not they sub-contract the agreement or any part of the agreement with or without consent.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current housing waiting list in South Belfast.
(AQW 55222/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that at 31 December 2015 there were 2,022 applicants on the waiting list for South Belfast of which 1,238 were in housing stress.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the housing waiting list in North Down.
(AQW 55338/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that at 31 December 2015 there were 2,063 applicants on the waiting list for North Down Parliamentary constituency of which 1,254 were in housing stress.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Shared Neighbourhood Scheme at Market Road, Ballymena.
(AQW 55344/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Market Road, Ballymena scheme was nominated as a Together Building United Communities (TBUC) scheme in January this year. Choice Housing Association has conducted a community consultation process informing local residents, councillors, MLA's and the local community group. A contractor is due to be appointed within the next two weeks with work programmed to commence before the end of March 2016.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants that had a sanction applied from October 2014 as a result of the Steps 2 Success Programme; (ii) maximum sanction applied to any individual during that period; and (iii) number of sanctions that involved benefits being stopped for (a) 2 weeks; (b) 4 weeks or (c) 26 weeks.
(AQW 55347/11-16)

Lord Morrow: As individual claimants may be sanctioned more than once during any specified period, it is not possible to provide the figures on the number of individual Jobseekers Allowance claimants who have had a sanction imposed. Similarly it is not possible to differentiate between sanctions applied to claimants who were on the Steps to Work programme and those who were participating in the Steps 2 Success programme.

Data can however be provided on the total number of Jobseekers Allowance sanctions imposed during any specified period. I can advise that 4,073 Jobseekers Allowance claimants were sanctioned during the period 1st October 2014 to 29th February 2016 whilst participating in either the Steps to Work or Steps to Success

programmes. The figures provided from 1st June 2015 are taken from a new recording system (Decision Making and Appeals Case Recorder).

Whilst I can also confirm that the current maximum period that a sanction can be imposed is 26 weeks, I am unable to provide information on the actual duration of individual sanctions imposed due to system contracts.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how he will consult with local stakeholders, including businesses and community groups, to consider local views on how the £27m from his Department should be spent in regards to the regeneration of Portrush.

(AQW 55368/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Portrush regeneration strategy published by Coleraine Borough Council in 2007 set out the strategic direction for the regeneration of Portrush for the next 15-20 years. It also identified the projects that would help deliver this strategy. As these projects are delivered there will be full public consultation on each individual project.

In addition to this my Officials are currently working with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to establish a Portrush regeneration consultative group. It is envisaged that this group will represent a wide range of interests from the Portrush area and will be responsible for engaging with and consulting the wider Portrush community on key regeneration initiatives being taken forward.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) how; and (ii) when the £27m funding from his Department will be spent on the regeneration of Portrush.

(AQW 55369/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The proposed programme of regeneration activities is broken into two categories and is still subject to funding being approved. The plan sets out the £17 million of regeneration activities that could be completed prior to the Open Championship arriving in 2019 and the £10 million of works relating to the redevelopment of the harbour area in 2020/21. The projects set out in the Portrush regeneration programme include:

- The redevelopment of the Train Station
- A major public realm scheme for the town centre
- The redevelopment of the harbour
- Implementation of key regeneration initiatives in the Portrush regeneration strategy
- Improvements to parking and transportation
- Urban Development Grant and Revitalisation programmes.

DSD has agreed to commit funding of £0.5 million from its 2016/17 capital budget to take forward some design work on the new train station and public realm projects. These projects are time critical and this work is essential if the capital build elements are to be completed before the Open Championship in 2019.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the community background of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the South West area.

(AQW 55388/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:

Housing Executive Staff Community Background

Area	Protestant	Catholic	Not Known	Total
South West Area	107	189	2	298

- 1 This information reflects the situation as at 29 February 2016 and does not include Agency Staff.
- 2 The South West Area includes Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Craigavon (relates to Departments based within Marlborough House, Craigavon).
- 3 The NIHE has advised that the definition of 'Community Background' is based on 'perceived religious affiliation', as per the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the South West area that have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (ii) the number of those granted broken down by community background.

(AQW 55389/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:

- (i) 108 staff in the South West area have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme.
- (ii) The number of those applications granted broken down by community background is as follows:

Number granted VES to date by Community Background

Reporting Unit	Protestant	Catholic	Total
South West Area	21	21	42

- 1 The information provided reflects the situation as at 14 March 2016.
- 2 The South West Area includes Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Craigavon (Departments based within Marlborough House, Craigavon).
- 3 The term 'granted' denotes that an offer has been made and has either been accepted or that the Housing Executive is awaiting a response.
- 4 The NIHE has advised that the definition of 'Community Background' is based on 'perceived religious affiliation', as per the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the South West area that have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (ii) how many applications have been granted. (AQW 55390/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised me that 108 staff in the South West area have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (as at 14 March 2016) 42 applications have been granted.

This information relates to staff in Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Craigavon (Departments based within Marlborough House, Craigavon). The term "granted" denotes that an offer has been made and has either been accepted or that the Housing Executive is awaiting a response.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff employed in the South West area, broken down by (a) permanent; and (b) temporary contracts. (AQW 55391/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:

Number of staff employed

Area	Permanent	Temporary	Total
South West Area	283	14	297

- 1 The information in this reply reflects the situation on 29 February 2016.
- 2 This reply does not include Agency Staff. There was, in addition, one member of staff on a fixed term contract.
- 3 The South West Area includes Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Craigavon (relates to Departments based within Marlborough House, Craigavon).

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the community background of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the Mid Ulster area. (AQW 55392/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the table below detailing the community background of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the Mid Ulster area.

Housing Executive Staff Community Background

Area	Protestant	Catholic	Not Known	Total
Mid Ulster Area	14	26	1	41

- 1 This reply reflects the situation as at 29 February 2016 and the figures do not include Agency Staff.
- 2 The information provided relates to Cookstown, Magherafelt, Dungannon and Mid Ulster office areas.
- 3 The NIHE has advised that the definition of 'Community Background' is based on 'perceived religious affiliation', as per the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the Mid Ulster area that have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (ii) the number granted broken down by community background. (AQW 55393/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that 24 applications for the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) have been received for its staff in the Mid Ulster Area.

Regarding the number granted broken down by community background, the Housing Executive advises that given that there are less than 10 in the group, the community background cannot be provided for successful applicants. This is because in all such cases where there are less than 10 in a particular group, publication is withheld to ensure that the identities of any individual cannot be inferred from data published.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the Mid Ulster area that have applied for the Voluntary Exit Scheme; and (ii) how many applications have been granted. (AQW 55394/11-16)

Lord Morrow:

- (i) The Housing Executive has confirmed that it received 24 applications for the Voluntary Exit Scheme in the Mid Ulster Area; and
- (ii) As at 14 March 2016, 9 applications have been granted.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff employed in the Mid Ulster area, broken down by (a) permanent; and (b) temporary contracts. (AQW 55395/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that the total number of staff employed in the Mid Ulster area is 41. This number includes-

- (a) 39 staff on permanent contracts; and
 - (b) 1 member of staff on a temporary contract.
- 1 Please note there is 1 member of staff employed on a fixed term contract.
 - 2 The Housing Executive advises that this information reflects the situation at 29 February 2016.
 - 3 Mid Ulster Area is defined as the Cookstown, Magherafelt, Dungannon and Mid Ulster office areas.
 - 4 Agency staff has not been included in this reply.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) staffing grades; and (ii) community background of all Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff employed in the Mid Ulster area. (AQW 55396/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:

- (i) Table detailing staffing Grades for Mid Ulster area:

Staffing Grades	Number
Level 1	3
Level 2	4
Level 3	7
Level 4	14
Level 5	3
Level 6	4
Level 7	1
Level 8	1
Technical Level 2	4
Total	41

- (ii) Table detailing community background of staff in Mid Ulster area:

Housing Executive Staff Community Background

Area	Protestant	Catholic	Not Known	Total
Mid Ulster Area	14	26	1	41

- 1 The reply does not include Agency Staff and reflects the situation as at 29 February 2016.
- 2 The NIHE has advised that the definition of 'Community Background' is based on 'perceived religious affiliation', as per the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

3 The information provided relates to Cookstown, Magherafelt, Dungannon and Mid Ulster office areas.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) staffing grades; and (ii) community background of all Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff employed in the South West area.

(AQW 55397/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:

Staffing Grades	Total
Level 01	6
Level 02	35
Level 03	60
Level 04	98
Level 05	34
Level 06	13
Level 07	11
Level 08	2
Level 09	1
Technical Level 02	21
Technical Level 03	14
Technical Level 07	3
Total	298

Community Background South West Area

Staffing Grades	Protestant	Catholic	Not Known	Total
South West Area	107	189	2	298

- 1 The Housing Executive advises that this reply reflects the situation as at 29 February 2016 and does not include Agency Staff.
- 2 The South West Area includes Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Craigavon (relates to Departments based within Marlborough House, Craigavon).
- 3 The NIHE has advised that the definition of 'Community Background' is based on 'perceived religious affiliation', as per the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail of average cost per social housing unit built since 1998.
(AQW 55427/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive took over the management of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) budget from 2007/08. Information prior to this is not available.

The average total cost per social housing unit built from 2007/08 to date is £129k. The total costs include land, construction and on-costs.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average departmental grant and borrowing per social new build house since 1998.

(AQW 55428/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive took over the management of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) budget from 2007/08. Information prior to this is not available.

- The average Housing Association Grant from 2007/08 to date is £82k.
- The average Private Finance per unit from 2007/08 to date is £47k.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of co-ownership affordable houses delivered since 1998.

(AQW 55429/11-16)

Lord Morrow: Between January 1998 and month end February 2016, a total of 11,604 affordable homes were delivered through the Co-Ownership Scheme.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how much has been spent on Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes, broken down by partnership area, since 2007.

(AQW 55430/11-16)

Lord Morrow: In line with the Department for Social Development's Retention and Disposal Schedule, financial records are not held beyond six years. Accordingly, the table attached in Annex A includes detail on the breakdown of funding per Neighbourhood Renewal Area from 2009/10 year to 2014/15. As we remain within the 2015/16 financial year and the accounts remain to be finalised details for this year have not been provided.

It should be noted that there are 34 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships that cover 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs); Coalisland and Dungannon NRAs are represented by one Partnership as are both NRAs in Coleraine.

Annex A

NRA	2009/2010 (£)	2010/2011 (£)	2011/2012 (£)	2012/2013 (£)	2013/2014 (£)	2014/2015 (£)	Total (£)
Andersonstown	573,150.34	262,561.53	256,042.37	398,751.00	464,225.00	502,482.00	2,457,212.24
Armagh	471,936.41	471,246.37	437,539.78	541,318.56	795,379.00	454,267.04	3,171,687.16
Ballyclare	119,525.54	37,221.23	43,223.56	29,551.00	125,897.00	116,992.40	472,410.73
Ballymena	401,327.10	521,181.90	149,776.91	693,149.09	343,666.00	358,508.85	2,467,609.85
Bangor	228,538.04	169,620.61	128,259.45	430,001.91	329,900.00	266,524.05	1,552,844.06
Brownlow	1,629,853.73	490,872.91	918,873.98	868,476.77	1,290,509.00	1,041,181.17	6,239,767.56
Cityside	1,986,000.00	1,395,000.00	1,557,000.00	1,140,000.00	1,753,333.00	2,362,827.00	10,194,160.00
Coalisland & Dungannon	477,947.57	307,720.31	212,191.78	487,692.09	967,240.00	685,645.49	3,138,437.24
Coleraine	665,892.88	604,449.50	321,192.26	481,624.06	1,283,992.00	1,048,438.20	4,405,588.90
Colin	1,185,206.30	758,934.45	709,396.06	1,031,809.00	1,100,585.00	929,930.00	5,715,860.81
Crumlin/ Ardoyne	1,234,680.89	807,921.16	838,637.83	738,063.00	1,175,697.00	1,143,809.60	5,938,809.48
Downpatrick	848,916.38	416,455.45	268,638.76	690,804.00	453,206.00	342,597.89	3,020,618.48
Enniskillen	164,002.29	252,255.37	507,686.14	520,176.50	1,334,478.00	811,235.56	3,589,833.86
Greater Falls	3,616,296.17	1,079,263.63	1,304,588.80	1,808,529.00	867,402.00	902,733.00	9,578,812.60
Greater Shankill	995,118.52	1,441,804.14	1,087,433.41	1,988,828.00	2,227,192.00	1,854,827.59	9,595,203.66
Inner East Belfast	973,953.48	1,947,650.87	4,407,371.70	2,634,833.00	5,303,169.00	1,738,395.46	17,005,373.51
Inner North	801,934.71	1,008,072.90	867,111.16	565,225.00	1,212,761.00	1,036,907.89	5,492,012.66
Inner South Belfast	379,133.31	416,420.09	537,888.89	1,185,451.00	585,998.00	396,441.25	3,501,332.54
Lenadoon	417,850.05	421,265.50	435,532.63	570,829.00	557,947.63	649,675.80	3,053,100.61
Ligoniel	18,938.89	159,496.38	197,379.35	158,746.00	238,000.00	236,258.27	1,008,818.89
Limavady	385,000.00	162,000.00	419,000.00	197,000.00	430,975.00	599,463.00	2,193,438.00
Lurgan	946,915.28	763,839.25	849,977.72	990,301.70	1,506,281.00	1,015,756.89	6,073,071.84
Newry	934,215.19	877,950.80	765,459.20	1,211,204.00	1,271,913.00	546,579.87	5,607,322.06
NW Portadown	264,113.14	171,055.93	488,944.44	523,159.05	751,505.00	638,595.84	2,837,373.40
Omagh	277,823.65	528,239.53	1,047,353.59	932,994.61	539,141.00	358,494.73	3,684,047.11
Outer North	1,637,000.00	965,000.00	787,000.00	855,000.00	1,293,220.00	2,125,801.00	7,663,021.00
Outer West	611,000.00	610,000.00	596,000.00	631,000.00	776,390.00	1,564,742.00	4,789,132.00

NRA	2009/2010 (£)	2010/2011 (£)	2011/2012 (£)	2012/2013 (£)	2013/2014 (£)	2014/2015 (£)	Total (£)
Rathcoole	80,216.79	101,165.27	121,083.42	229,691.00	291,950.00	167,754.44	991,860.92
South West Belfast	1,228,928.80	666,167.10	669,048.00	622,349.00	490,726.00	652,580.45	4,329,799.35
Strabane	588,000.00	531,000.00	451,000.00	463,000.00	661,022.00	1,468,994.00	4,163,016.00
Tullycarnet	285,178.27	264,322.32	174,432.15	250,457.00	356,929.00	317,182.22	1,648,500.96
Upper Ardoyne/ Ballysillan	305,990.54	595,748.21	320,155.37	191,800.00	298,980.00	257,308.34	1,969,982.46
Upper Springfield / Whiterock	1,054,737.82	994,480.47	1,148,340.25	1,166,736.00	1,376,458.00	1,119,037.00	6,859,789.54
Waterside	861,000.00	876,000.00	925,000.00	685,000.00	1,253,833.00	1,386,979.00	5,987,812.00
	£27,157,952.27	£21,432,343.49	£25,169,402.74	£26,401,242.43	£34,677,139.63	£29,784,592.78	£164,622,673.34

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of the age profile of people on the housing waiting list in North Down, including 16-18 year olds.

(AQW 55432/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that the age profile of people on the housing waiting list for North Down at 31 December 2015 was as follows:-

Age Band	Total
16-17	1
18-25	257
26-59	1,103
60+	702
Total	2,063

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people in North Down that are claiming Disability Living Allowance, broken down by eligibility criteria.

(AQW 55433/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below shows the number of Disability Living Allowance claimants in the North Down Assembly area broken down by eligibility criteria at November 2015.

Disability Living Allowance Component	Number of Claimants
Higher rate care only	110
Middle rate care only	340
Lower rate care only	410
Higher rate mobility only	350
Lower rate mobility only	100
Higher rate care and higher rate mobility	1,290
Higher rate care and lower rate mobility	730
Middle rate care and higher rate mobility	1,560
Middle rate care and lower rate mobility	1,660
Lower rate care and higher rate mobility	510
Lower rate care and lower rate mobility	130
Total	7,180

The information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by the UK Statistics Authority

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of social housing new builds since 1998. (AQW 55436/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The table below details the total social housing starts from 1998/99 to 16 March 2016

The figures include all new social housing starts across all scheme types i.e New Build, Off-the-Shelf, Existing Satisfactory Purchases and Rehabilitation/Re-improvement.

Year	Total Starts
1998/99	2,297
1999/00	1,820
2000/01	1,127
2001/02	1,030
2002/03	900
2003/04	1,26
2004/05	1,317
2005/06	1,519
2006/07	1,032
2007/08	1,595
2008/09	1,136
2009/10	1,838
2010/11	2,418
2011/12	1,410
2012/13	1,379
2013/14	1,299
2014/15	2,013
2015/16 to 16 March 2016	471
Total	26,127

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Supporting People budget for each of the last 5 years; and the projected budget for 2016-17.

(AQW 55451/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Supporting People budget for the last five years is detailed below:

Year	Final Budget £'000
2011-12	65,184
2012-13	66,384
2013-14	69,584
2014-15	71,781
2015-16	72,798

Please note that these figures represent the final budget allocation in each financial year. The budget for 2016/2017 is currently being finalised.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies have spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 55466/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The information requested is included on the table below and relates to external consultancy expenditure in each of the financial years between 2011/12 to 2014/15.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
DSD	£931,153	£987,560	£986,488	£6,024,207 ¹
Housing Executive	£13,000	£0	£52,959	£55,814
Charity Commission NI	£11,440	£0	£0	£0
ILEX ²	£74,178	£99,072	-	-

Significant increase is due to £4.6 million expenditure in the Social Housing Reform Programme.

1. Significant increase is due to £4.6 million expenditure in the Social Housing Reform Programme.
2. OFMdFM became the sole sponsor for ILEX from 1 April 2013

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on social housing plans in North Down.

(AQW 55480/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I can advise you that 43 new social housing units have been completed to date and a further, 577 new social housing units are either on site or planned to start as part of the 2015/16 to 2017/18 Social Housing Development Programme. The details of which are as follows:

Schemes completed to date

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Type	Need Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Clanmil	Bloomfield Road/South Circular Road (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	General Needs	37	2011/12	2015/16
Clanmil	South Circular Road Extension (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	General Needs	4	2013/14	2015/16
Connswater	11 Willowbrook Park, Bangor	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	1	2014/15	2015/16
Helm Housing	8 Cypress Park, Donaghadee	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	1	2015/16	2015/16
Total				43		

Social housing schemes planned in North Down as part of the 2013/4-2015/16

Social Housing Development Programme.

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Type	Need Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Ark	Kilclief Gardens (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	General Needs	16	2014/15	2016/17
Choice	North Down Young People Leaving Care, Donaghadee Road, Bangor	New Build	Young People Leaving Care	12	2014/15	2016/17
Fold	Rathgill Parade (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	General Needs	92	2014/15	2016/17
Fold	Rathgill Parade (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	Physically Disabled	10	2014/15	2016/17

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Type	Need Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Helm Housing	22 Croft Road, Hollywood	New Build	Active Elderly	26	2014/15	2016/17
Ulidia	111 Hamilton Road, Bangor	Re-improvement	Vulnerable Women	7	2014/15	2016/17
Choice	Croft Community, 71 Bloomfield Road, Bangor	Re-improvement	Learning Disabilities	20	2015/16	2016/17
Clanmil	36 Abbey Road, Millisle	New Build	General Needs	2	2015/16	2016/17
Connswater	12 Berkley Square, Bangor	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	1	2015/16	2015/16
Fold	Skipperstone Road, Bangor	New Build	General Needs	14	2015/16	2017/18
Fold	13 McClay Fold, Bangor	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	Sheltered	1	2015/16	2015/16
Helm Housing	14 Cypress Park, Donaghadee	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	1	2015/16	2015/16
Helm Housing	13 Balligan Gardens, Bangor	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	1	2015/16	2015/16
Habinteg	34-36 Bangor Road, Hollywood	New Build	General Needs	6	2015/16	2016/17
Helm Housing	5-13 & 17 Moss Road, Millisle	Off-the-Shelf	General Needs	6	2015/16	2015/16
Clanmil	Beechfield (Transfer), Donaghadee	New Build	General Needs	10	2015/16	2016/17
Ark	Ravara House, Ravara Gardens (North Down Older People), Bangor	New Build	Housing with Care	24	2015/16	2017/18
Fold	Rathgill Phase B (Transfer), Bangor	New Build	General Needs	77	2015/16	2017/18
Choice	Clifton Special Care School, Bangor	New Build	General Needs	106	2015/16	2018/19
Clanmil	Corner of Faulkner Road/Clanboyne Road, Bangor	New Build	General Needs	58	2016/17	2018/19
Clanmil	66a -78 Bloomfield Road, Bangor	New Build	General Needs	52	2016/17	2019/20
Habinteg	Killaughey Road, Donaghadee	New Build	General Needs	24	2016/17	2018/19
Hearth	Craigowen Gate Lodge, 208 Bangor Road	New Build	General Needs	1	2016/17	2017/18
Helm Housing	18 Warren Road, Donaghadee	New Build	General Needs	10	2017/18	2018/19
Total				577		

Please be advised that programmed schemes can be lost, or slip to future programme years, for a variety of reasons e.g. relating to site acquisition/achieving Planning permission. Additional schemes can also be added to the SHDP through the purchase of Existing Satisfactory/Off-the-shelf properties in-year, and through the annual housing association bidding round/programme formulation process.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Social Development, given the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that social housing rents would be reduced by one per cent for each of the next four years, whether he has given any consideration to implementing the same reductions locally.

(AQW 55490/11-16)

Lord Morrow: I have given this issue my consideration and rejected the possibility of rent reductions for NIHE tenants. Social rents must be affordable for tenants, but if they are too low they will make social housing itself unsustainable. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's rents have been at much lower levels than local authority rents in England for some time. Their current level is lower than the level comparable English rents will reach even after reductions over the next four years.

Increases are needed to close this gap and sustain the stock of the NIHE. My Department recently released survey results that show that £1.5bn of investment is needed in the NIHE stock in the 5 years from 2015/16. Rental levels must help support that investment requirement.

Following the policy decision to cut social rents in England, HM Treasury indicated that the devolved administrations would be expected to identify proportionate savings in Housing Benefit. In light of this, I decided to freeze Northern Ireland Housing Executive rents for 2016/17 and recommended that Housing Associations should also apply a rent freeze. I am keenly aware of the impact of this decision for the Housing Executive and its maintenance programme and officials will continue to engage with HM Treasury on this matter as a priority.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development when he will make a decision on the future funding of Women's Aid Centres.
(AQW 55498/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Supporting People (SP) funding position for 2016/17 has recently been agreed. During a time when public finances are under strain and despite having to find significant savings across my Department, Supporting People funding has been protected at 2015/16 levels. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive will confirm the individual funding positions with all providers, including Women's Aid Centres, in due course.

Mr Milne asked the Minister for Social Development whether the (a) Affordable Warmth Scheme will have delivered energy saving measures to 9000 dwellings in 2015-2016; and (b) the target of 9000 dwellings will be, or has been, changed to 9000 saving measures.

(AQW 55499/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Programme for Government included a commitment to "introduce and support a range of initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty across Northern Ireland, including preventative interventions." This commitment had an associated milestone to improve 9,000 homes each year.

Since April 2015 the Affordable Warmth Scheme has replaced the Warm Homes Scheme as my Department's main tool in addressing fuel poverty in privately owned and privately rented homes. The Affordable Warmth Scheme is fundamentally different from the Warm Homes Scheme. Research suggests that self-referral schemes, such as Warm Homes, do not always reach the most vulnerable fuel poor households. Therefore, Affordable Warmth is a targeted scheme aimed at those identified as being in severe or extreme fuel poverty.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme spend per household is 2.7 times more than on the former Warm Homes Scheme. The average spend per household has risen from approximately £1,440 under the former Warm Homes Scheme to £3,900 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme. This results in a range of energy efficiency improvements to households including roof space and cavity wall insulation, new heating systems and replacement windows.

The Programme for Government commitment of 9,000 energy efficiency interventions is met through combining the work of the Affordable Warmth Scheme, the Boiler Replacement Scheme and other energy efficiency improvements carried out through the Housing Executive Home Improvement programme. The Department can only report on achievement of the overall target when the year ends on 31 March 2016, however, the indications are that the target will be reached.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development how his Department reaches homes that are experiencing fuel poverty but lie outside the main fuel poverty concentrations in local council areas.

(AQW 55543/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department has a range of schemes and programmes which improve the energy efficiency of low income households in Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive delivers a programme of heating and insulation improvement for its housing stock. Housing Associations also deliver energy efficiency improvements to their stock. The Boiler Replacement Scheme offers grants to privately owned households to replace old and inefficient boilers.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme finds privately owned and privately rented households most at risk of fuel poverty and provides them with a range of energy efficiency improvement measures. While the Affordable Warmth Scheme is primarily a targeted scheme, households not in the targeted areas who believe they meet the qualification criteria can contact their local council to determine if they can get assistance from the scheme.

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) also provides grants for energy efficiency improvement to households that do not meet the qualification criteria for other Government schemes.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will increase the number of homes targeted by the Affordable Warmth scheme.

(AQW 55544/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The number of homes which can be assisted by the Affordable Warmth Scheme depends on the budget available and the average amount spent on improving the energy efficiency of the home. The average spend per household in 2015/2016 was £3,900 (an increase from the £1,440 average spend under the former Warm Homes Scheme) and resulted in the delivery of multiple energy efficiency improvements including roof space and cavity wall insulation, new heating systems and replacement windows.

In 2016/17 it is anticipated that the Affordable Warmth Scheme will deliver at least 6,000 measures to 4,000 vulnerable households. The Affordable Warmth Scheme uses a targeted area based approach to identify vulnerable households most at risk of fuel poverty and encourage them to take advantage of the measures available.

My Department will continue to monitor demand for the scheme and keep the budget under review.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) how much funding his Department has provided to Women's Aid centres in each of the last five years; (ii) how much funding he has committed to Women's Aid for 2016-17; and (iii) any discussions he has had with Women's Aid regarding future funding.

(AQW 55545/11-16)

Lord Morrow:

- (i) The table below lists the Supporting People funding provided to Women's Aid providers (for accommodation and floating support services) for the past five years.

	2015-16 (£m)	2014-15 (£m)	2013-14 (£m)	2012-13 (£m)	2011-12 (£m)
Accommodation-based	2.75	2.70	2.60	2.77	2.72
Floating Support	1.94	1.91	1.75	1.38	1.18
Total	4.69	4.61	4.35	4.15	3.90

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- (ii) The Supporting People funding position for 2016/17 has recently been agreed. During a time when public finances are under strain and despite having to find significant savings across my Department, Supporting People funding has been protected at 2015/16 levels.
- (iii) I have not had any direct discussions with Women's Aid on funding for 2016/17 or future years. Officials from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive will confirm the individual funding positions for 2016/17 with all providers, including Women's Aid, in due course.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development why Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants with windows and frames that have been replaced, but have subsequently found to be defective must wait until a new scheme is brought forward in order to have those windows repaired or replaced; and whether contractual arrangements were made with the installers to repair any defects, or if this replacement is being done at a further cost to the public purse.

(AQW 55564/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Housing Executive has advised that its Double Glazing schemes are subject to inspection prior to acceptance of handover. If a defect should emerge following handover, there is a six month defect liability period where the cost to rectify this can be taken directly from scheme retention monies held expressly for that purpose. This ensures that there is no further cost to the public purse. Defects identified within the 6 month liability period are notified immediately and do not wait to be included in a new scheme.

Should a defect emerge after the 6 month liability period this is subject to an inspection. If it is found to be a latent defect in the window then it is the responsibility of the contractor to rectify this. If not it is addressed through the Housing Executive's response maintenance service, but again it does not have to wait to be included in a future planned scheme.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development to detail what action his Department is taking to address homelessness in Belfast.

(AQW 55565/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My Department addresses homelessness through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), which has statutory responsibility for responding to homelessness. The NIHE has a duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years and the current 2012 – 2017 strategy sets out a range of actions to achieve the vision of "eliminating long term homelessness and rough sleeping by 2020".

My Department chairs an inter-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, to provide guidance and direction on the Homelessness Strategy and includes representation from the voluntary provider sector as well as the statutory agencies including DHSSPS and DoJ.

DSD provides funding of over £35 million per year for homelessness services in Northern Ireland, of which some £13m per year is for homelessness services in Belfast. This funding includes help for those in emergency situations, funding for work to prevent homelessness, as well as housing support services through the Supporting People Programme.

Early intervention and prevention is a key element of the NIHE's Homelessness Strategy. In support of this, the NIHE is developing a Housing Options approach to improve how it delivers its frontline homelessness services. Currently being piloted within three Housing Executive Offices (Belfast, Causeway and South Down), the Housing Options Model will examine an individual's circumstances and choices in the widest sense when they seek housing advice to ensure that the housing solution is tailored to the specific needs of the individual with the necessary support provided where appropriate. Key objectives are to prevent homelessness and achieve choice both within the social housing and the private rental sector. NIHE plan to rollout its Housing Options Model across the organisation by March 2017

Homelessness is often characterised as being solely about rough sleeping when this is not the full picture. Rough Sleeping in Northern Ireland largely occurs in Belfast and to a lesser extent in Londonderry. Services in Belfast include:

- Providing day and night-time street outreach
- Providing a day centre with support services for up to 100 vulnerable service users
- Providing 20 crash beds and a night time reception service
- Provision of a wet hostel for up to 22 people
- 880 places of temporary accommodation for all types of households in Belfast, equating to over 2500 beds
- 351 of those places can be accessed directly by individuals

In recent years in Belfast there has been a growing visibility of street activity including street drinking, begging and rough sleeping leading to a perception that the need to sleep on the street is on the rise. Late last year the Housing Executive in partnership with the Welcome Centre, Depaul Ireland and Belfast City Centre Management completed a Belfast Street Needs Audit. The Audit was carried out over a 12 week period from May to July 2015 between the hours of 10pm and 8am to get as comprehensive a picture as possible of street activity in Belfast.

The Audit has highlighted that in addition to an entrenched group of rough sleepers who require case management from a housing perspective, there was a larger group observed that were engaged primarily in begging and street drinking. There are concerns that the visibility of this group is leading to a perception of higher rates of rough sleeping. A multi-agency approach is required to tackle this and two interagency groups have been established, one led by the NIHE to address the needs of identified chronic rough sleepers and the other, led by Belfast Community Safety Partnership will address the issues of street begging and street drinking.

Homelessness is much more than a housing issue. Tackling homelessness in all its dimensions requires the collaboration of a wide range of partners from the statutory, voluntary and community sector. Following the recent deaths linked to homelessness I have established a Ministerial Sub-Group with ministerial colleagues from Justice and Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explore further the issues of street homelessness in Belfast and identify what more needs to be done. The first meeting took place on 14 March and was also attended by members of the provider sector and NIHE.

An initial action plan has been developed which is being shared with NI Executive colleagues. The plan focuses on short-term and longer term actions to make existing services more accessible, address current identified gaps in service, improve linkages between services and raise public awareness on some key issues.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on when his Department will release further funding for the Affordable Warmth scheme to local councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
(AQW 55578/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Affordable Warmth Scheme is delivered in partnership between my Department, local councils and the Housing Executive. The budget to deliver the scheme will be available to councils and the Housing Executive from the beginning of the 2016/17 financial year.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development whether staff randomly selected for the Relocation Plan for Appeals and Reconsiderations will be forced to relocate against their wishes.
(AQW 55582/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The selection of staff for the Relocation Plan for Appeals and Reconsiderations was made in accordance with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Policy on Mobility. The Policy makes it clear that staff serving in mobile grades (permanent, full-time staff at Executive Officer II grade and above) may be transferred to any Civil Service post in Northern Ireland. Non-mobile staff are liable for permanent transfer only to posts within reasonable daily travelling distance of their home.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development whether staff in the Belfast region are included in the Relocation Plan for Appeals and Reconsiderations; and if so, whether there is a limit on the number of staff in the Belfast region that can be considered for transfer to the centralised team.

(AQW 55583/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The underlying principle in the Relocation Plan for Appeals and Reconsiderations is that staff currently completing this work will move with the function. The 15 staff currently working in the Appeals and Reconsiderations in the Belfast Region are included in the Relocation Plan and have already moved to the new centralised team.

To minimise the relocation of staff from other offices we have sought volunteers and a further 5 staff, again from within the Belfast Region, have moved to the centralised team.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will exclude staff from the Foyle Jobs and Benefits Office from the Relocation Plan for Appeals and Reconsiderations in order to protect the North West from the centralisation of services to Belfast.

(AQW 55584/11-16)

Lord Morrow: The Social Security Agency, as an agency of the Department for Social Development, is committed to being a regional organisation and currently has offices in every major town and city across Northern Ireland. In the North West, the Agency has more than 700 staff.

It is however important for the Agency to strike a balance between meeting the needs of claimants and those of staff and in order to safeguard service delivery to claimants it is sometimes necessary to relocate staff to ensure that services can continue to be delivered in an efficient and effective manner.

In setting up the new centralised Appeals and Reconsideration Team the underlying principle was that staff performing the function would relocate with the work. The Agency agreed a relocation approach with Trade Union Side, which

included seeking volunteers from local offices across Northern Ireland. However, this approach did not secure sufficient staff to fill all of the posts and it was therefore necessary to undertake a random selection of staff currently involved in appeals and reconsideration work. Whilst the majority of staff did come from the Belfast Region it was necessary to include staff from Foyle Jobs & Benefits office along with a number of other offices where this work was previously undertaken.

I am committed to ensuring there are job opportunities created outside the Belfast area and the Agency recently announced a number of significant investments in the North West that has resulted in additional jobs opportunities with further increases likely in the future. This includes Foyle Jobs & Benefits office being selected as a Universal Credit Service Centre requiring approximately 150 staff the establishment of a document scanning facility in Limavady Jobs and Benefits Office creating up to 40 new jobs and the opening of a new Jobs and Benefits Office in Strabane. In addition, the Agency has recently relocated work undertaken on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from the Belfast Benefits Centre, Plaza site to the Centre's Lisahally Processing Unit in order to secure jobs in the North West.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people that are considered homeless in South Belfast.

(AQW 55615/11-16)

Lord Morrow:

2014/15	South Belfast Totals
Presenters	568
Acceptances	316

The first line is the total number of households who presented as homeless to the Housing Executive in South Belfast in 2014/15. The second line refers to the total number of households, presenting in South Belfast, who were accepted as meeting all the statutory tests in order to be awarded Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status in 2014/15.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Housing Selection Scheme review.

(AQW 55639/11-16)

Lord Morrow: My officials continue to gather evidence and consider whether proposals for changes to the allocations system should be made, following publication of independent recommendations on this issue. Any change in policy will be a matter for the Minister of the new Department for Communities.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to explain the internal audit arrangements in place in respect of checking and validating expenses claims by MLAs.

(AQW 54639/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The annual audit of MLA expenses involves a random sample of 25% of Members from each of the political parties (single Member parties and independents are grouped together) and over the course of a mandate the aim is to ensure that each Member is included at least once.

Reviews are usually carried out at the start of each financial year and cover all of the OCE claims made by each Member of the sample in the preceding financial year.

The aim of the annual exercise is to assess the extent to which OCE payments are compliant with the administrative rules that apply in the period concerned. Fieldwork entails: the examination of records held by the Finance Office including claims made by Members, supporting information, and payments made on foot of the claims. Verification visits are also made to all of the constituency offices of Members in the sample. Verification testing includes confirming the existence of significant purchases made in the period.

The results of each annual exercise inform the assurance that is provided to the Accounting Officer of the NI Assembly regarding Members' expenses.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission what has been the total subsidy for catering in each of Parliament Buildings' canteens, bars and dining rooms in each year since May 2011.

(AQW 54906/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Due to the nature of Assembly business and the requirement that services are often provided during unsocial sitting hours and for events, where the costs of providing such services exceeds the monies taken in, the extra cost is assumed by the Assembly. This is often referred to as operating cost or "subsidy".

It is not possible to breakdown the operating cost/subsidy for each individual area i.e. Blue Flax, Café Recess etc., due to the nature of the Support Services contract where labour is distributed across all the outlets. Indeed, staff are not assigned to one particular catering outlet for every shift worked. Therefore, the table below sets out the overall subsidy/operating cost for catering since May 2011 to the most recent trading period, February 2016.

Month	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Jan		£29331.70	£31419.47	£34339.74	£30632.56	£30902.45
Feb		£23812.58	£17245.57	£17088.54	£21041.71	£21938.17
Mar		£21718.79	£8980.49	£47746.32	£15640.44	
Apr		£25219.45	£23572.82	£24870.23	£29888.34	
May	£46206.22	£24885.52	£11932.82	£23378.66	£28284.56	
June	£11600.21	£13638.91	£4441.44	£7929.21	£2480.27	
July	£35003.23	£42855.92	£27491.82	£36995.11	£41117.52	
Aug	£30510.15	£35723.64	£35888.77	£38001.32	£31962.99	
Sept	£24635.28	£11215.21	£16317.66	£21834.11	£16693.41	
Oct	£15340.46	£18242.25	£11653.06	£5008.70	£22658.27	
Nov	£20792.98	£16955.97	£21297.56	£14041.84	£21939.32	
Dec	£21152.00	£8752.33	£11701.45	£17206.18	£17898.85	
Total	£205,240.53	£272,352.27	£222,942.93	£288,439.96	£280,238.24	£52840.62

Please note that the level of operating cost/subsidy fluctuates depending on the volume of sales and functions/events.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to detail the total running cost of the Assembly in each of the last three years.
(AQW 55039/11-16)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The total running costs of the Assembly Commission in each of the last three years are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Total Assembly Running Costs

£m	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total Costs	£44,448.8	£43,007.5	£48,952.2*

* Includes one-off provision of £5.6m in respect of Members' pension costs.

These are reported annually in the Annual Report and Resource Accounts, which are published on the Assembly's website.

Mr McElduff asked the Assembly Commission whether it will put in place measures to ensure that people in the public gallery will be able to hear clearly proceedings in the Assembly Chamber.

(AQW 55076/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission has long recognised the importance of making arrangements to facilitate the participation of the deaf and hearing impaired community in the work of the Assembly. Various steps have been taken to ensure that all Assembly services are accessible to as many people as possible and, as such, Parliament Buildings achieved Action for Hearing Loss's 'Louder than Words' charter mark in 2011 and has continued to maintain it since. Indeed earlier this year the Speaker agreed that, where appropriate and by prior arrangement, the Assembly could arrange for a sign language interpreter to be in the public gallery to provide a service during a relevant plenary debate.

In addition, the sound level in the public gallery is adjustable and it is altered to suit the number of people in attendance in the galleries. However Assembly officials will ensure that the system is working correctly and if the sound levels are proving to be problematic, officials will review the current infrastructure to assess what can be done to improve the experience for visitors to the public gallery.

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission whether there has been an assessment of the impact of the heavy use of Parliament Buildings since 1998 on its interior.

(AQW 55331/11-16)

Ms P Bradley (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Although there has been no formal assessment of the impact of the heavy use of Parliament Buildings since 1998 on its interior, the building is regularly inspected to ensure that it remains in a condition befitting its grade B+ listed status and that it is fit for purpose for all building users.

This includes formal risk assessments and routine inspections by building maintenance and cleaning staff and all issues identified are addressed at the earliest available opportunity.

There is no evidence to suggest that the increased usage has had a detrimental effect on the interior of the building.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Assembly Commission how it will address access for Members to the apron at the front of Parliament Buildings.

(AQW 55610/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The pedestrian gate at the front of Parliament Buildings is kept locked and secure at all times, however by arrangement it may be used by Members to gain access from the front steps to the apron directly in front of the perimeter fence.

Any Member who wishes to use that gate should in the first instance contact either the Assembly Control Room on extension 21001, or the Usher Services office on extensions 21900 or 21006. The gate will then be opened by an Usher to allow the Member access onto the Apron, and it will then be immediately locked again.

Ushers will normally not be able to remain at the pedestrian gate, however it can be re-opened for the Member if required, as outlined above.

It should be noted that only Members will be able to re-enter Parliament Buildings directly via the pedestrian gate, and that all other persons who wish to re-enter must do so via the Search Facility at East Glen.

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission whether it has any plans to introduce a no smoking policy within the grounds of Parliament Buildings.

(AQW 55625/11-16)

Mr Gardiner (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission has no plans to introduce a no smoking policy within the immediate environs of Parliament Buildings which are under its control.

However, this is an issue which the new Commission appointed following Assembly elections may wish to revisit.

Revised Written Answers

This section contains the revised written answers to questions tabled by Members. The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Revised Written Answers

Department for Social Development

In Bound Volume 111, page WA 198, replace the answer given for AQW 52157/11-16 with:

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of staff the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has employed in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 52157/11-16)

Lord Morrow (The Minister for Social Development): The table below details the number of staff employed by the Housing Executive in each of the last 10 calendar years at 31 December in each year.

Year	Number of Employees	Number of Agency Staff	Total
2006	3477	Not available	3477
2007	3506	Not available	3506
2008	3345	Not available	3345
2009	3280	Not available	3280
2010	3187	Not available	3187
2011	3146	Not available	3146
2012	3043	Not available	3043
2013	3167	437	3604
2014	3083	535	3618
2015	2860	639	3499

Department of Education

In Bound Volume 113, page WA 17, replace the answer given for AQW 54126/11-16 with:

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the investment his Department has made in Fermanagh and South Tyrone since 2011.

(AQW 54126/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The following table provides details of funding provided by my Department for the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency in each complete financial year since 2011:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Resource	94,193	94,580	91,301	100,658
Capital	3,430	2,902	4,311	10,004
Total	97,623	97,482	95,612	110,661

This includes funding provided by the Education Authority for schools, Community and Youth Organisations.

Funding relating to the Education Authority's block (centre) expenditure, Middletown Centre for Autism and Area Learning Communities is not included as it cannot be disaggregated on a constituency basis.

In this Bound Volume, page WA 39, replace the answer given for AQW 55204/11-16 with:

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the total amount of money sought by applicants to the new Early Years Pathway Fund.

(AQW 55204/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Early Years - the Organisation for Young Children (which administers the Pathway Fund on behalf of DE) advises that the total amount of funding requested by applicants to the Fund is £5,423,174.47.

In this Bound Volume, page WA 39, replace the answer given for AQW 55206/11-16 with:

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail how many applications were made to the new Early Years Pathway Fund.

(AQW 55206/11-16)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years - the Organisation for Young Children (which administers the Pathway Fund on behalf of DE) advises that 289 applications were received.

Department of the Environment

In this Bound Volume, page WA 230, replace the answer given for AQW 55198/11-16 with:

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the tariffs for newly installed taxi meters; and the criteria for setting the tariffs.

(AQW 55198/11-16)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The model for the maximum fare allows for three different flag drop fares (£3 for 6am-8pm Monday-Friday, £3.40 for 8pm-6am Monday-Thursday, and £4.20 for weekends), £0.20 for every 224 yards travelled or for each 73 seconds while the vehicle is stationary, the addition of tolls and other direct charges, the addition of £1 to the flag drop for the 5th and each additional passenger, and a maximum soiling charge of £75. The fare is broadly in line with the current regulated fare for Belfast Public Hire vehicles. It should be noted that the fare is a maximum fare and drivers can choose to use reduced tariffs in their taximeters. This is particularly pertinent in rural areas. The Department is currently making two amendments to the maximum tariff in relation to the waiting time and an enhanced fare to cover the Christmas and New Year periods. These changes have been accepted by the Environment Committee and will be relayed to the industry in early course.

PA Consulting Services/Transport Research Institute carried out research on behalf of the Department in both rural and urban areas of Northern Ireland on the costs of providing a taxi service. The analysis identified the key elements that contribute to taxi driver costs, such as; fuel, vehicle capital & maintenance, insurance and of course the labour cost of the taxi driver and how these could be recouped to reflect the cost of supply. The tariff then is constructed to recoup these costs using a charge for distance and time and also provides for an unsociable hours premium (e.g. night times and weekends), an extra passenger allowance, direct journey expenses (airport parking tolls etc) and a soiling charge.

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 14 March 2016

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Royal Assent – Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Speaker informed Members that Royal Assent had been signified, on 11 March 2016, to the Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Motion – Suspension of Standing Orders

Proposed:

That Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) be suspended for 14 March 2016.

Mr P Weir

Ms C Ruane

Mrs K McKeivitt

Mr R Swann

Mr S Dickson

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – Scoping Study: Children in the Justice System

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, made a statement regarding the Scoping Study: Children in the Justice System, following which he replied to questions.

4.2 Statement – Social Housing Investment and Reform

The Minister for Social Development, the Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley, made a statement regarding social housing investment and reform, following which he replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

4.3 Further Consideration Stage – Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16)

The Minister for Regional Development, Miss Michelle McIlveen, moved the Further Consideration Stage of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16).

There were no amendments tabled to the Bill.

The Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16) stood referred to the Speaker for consideration in accordance with section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.4 Final Stage – Justice (No.2) Bill (NIA Bill 57/11-16)

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, moved that the Final Stage of the Justice (No.2) Bill (NIA Bill 57/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker in the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mr Jonathan Bell.

5.2 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

6. Executive Committee Business (cont'd)

6.1 Final Stage – Justice (No.2) Bill (NIA Bill 57/11-16) (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Justice (No.2) Bill (NIA Bill 57/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.2 Motion – The Draft Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

6.3 Motion – The Draft Driver and Vehicle Agency Trading Fund Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Driver and Vehicle Agency Trading Fund Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of the Environment

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.4 Motion – The Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of the Environment

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 1).

6.5 Motion – The Draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

A valid Petition of Concern was presented under Standing Order 28, on Friday 11 March 2016 in relation to the Motion (Appendix 1).

Proposed:

That the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of the Environment

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote (Division 2).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

6.6 Motion – The Local Government Auditor’s Draft Code of Audit Practice 2016**Proposed:**

That the Local Government Auditor's draft Code of Audit Practice 2016 be approved.

Minister of the Environment

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.7 Motion – The Draft Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the draft Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Finance and Personnel

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.8 Motion – The Draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.9 Motion – The Draft Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the draft Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.10 Motion – The Draft Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Committee Business

7.1 Motion – Amend Standing Order 10(1)

Proposed:

In Standing Order 10(1) leave out sub-paragraphs (a) to (i) and insert –

- ‘(a) Assembly Business;
- (b) Executive Committee Business;
- (c) Committee Business;
- (d) Questions;
- (e) Opposition Business;
- (f) Private Members’ Business;
- (g) Private Business;
- (h) Adjournment Debates;
- (i) Party Business; and
- (j) Matters of the Day.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.2 Motion – Amend Standing Order 20A

Proposed:

Leave out Standing Order 20A and insert –

‘20A. Topical Questions

- (1) Topical questions for a Minister shall be taken during the last 15 minutes of the time allocated for questions for oral answer by that Minister.
- (2) No topical questions shall be asked of the Assembly Commission.
- (3) A member who wishes to ask a topical question of a Minister at a particular sitting shall submit his or her name in advance to the Speaker.
- (4) The Speaker shall allow up to 10 members to ask a topical question.
- (5) Except where paragraphs 6-8 apply, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which members may ask a topical question.
- (6) Where—
 - (a) there is an official opposition; and
 - (b) at least one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3),

the first topical question must be asked by a member of the official opposition.

- (7) Where more than one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3), the Speaker shall determine by which member of the official opposition the first topical question is to be asked.
- (8) Where the first topical question is to be asked by a member of the official opposition, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which subsequent questions are taken.
- (9) The first topical question may not be from a member of the same party as the Minister to whom it is addressed, unless all the topical questions are from members of that party.
- (10) The Speaker shall inform –
- (a) members; and
 - (b) the Ministers to whom the questions will be addressed at the sitting;
- in advance, of the names and order in which questions are to be taken.
- (11) Answers may not be debated, but the member asking the question may ask a supplementary question. A supplementary question may contain no more than one enquiry.
- (12) Where a member is not present to ask a topical question, the Speaker shall move to the next member in accordance with the order determined under paragraph (5).
- (13) Paragraphs (1)(a) and (2) of Standing Order 19 and paragraphs (2), (8A), (10) and (11) of Standing Order 20 shall apply to topical questions as they apply to questions for oral answer.'

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.3 Motion – Amend Standing Order 44(2)

Proposed:

Leave out Standing Order 44(2) and insert –

- '(2) Where section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, Ministerial offices must be filled by applying the procedures set out in section 18(2) to (6) within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which –
- (a) the determination mentioned in section 18(1)(b) takes effect;
 - (b) the resolution mentioned in section 18(1)(c) is passed;
 - (c) the direction mentioned in section 18(1)(d) is given; or
 - (d) the period of exclusion mentioned in section 18(1)(da) comes to an end.'

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures.

7.4 Motion – Amend Standing Order 44A(1)

Proposed:

Leave out Standing Order 44A(1) and insert –

- '(1) Where paragraph 3D(1) and (2)(a) of Schedule 4A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, the office of Minister of Justice must be filled by applying the procedures set out in paragraph 3D(4) to (8) in Part 1A of Schedule 4A within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which –
- (a) the determination mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(a) takes effect;
 - (b) the resolution mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(b) is passed;
 - (c) the direction mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(c) is given;
 - (d) the period of exclusion mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(d) comes to an end as so mentioned; or
 - (e) the Minister of Justice ceases to hold office as mentioned in paragraph 3D(14), otherwise than by virtue of an Assembly election.'

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.5 Motion – New Standing Order**Proposed:**

After Standing Order 45 insert –

‘45A. The Official Opposition

- (1) Subject to paragraph (2), where a party is entitled to nominate a person to hold Ministerial office under section 18(2) to (6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and declines to do so, that party may choose to be recognised as part of the official opposition.
- (2) A party is not to be recognised as part of the official opposition if any member of that party holds a Ministerial office, or held a Ministerial office and ceased to hold that office otherwise than at a time when all Northern Ireland Ministers ceased to hold office.
- (3) Where only one party chooses to be recognised in accordance with paragraph (1) that party is to be regarded as the official opposition.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.6 Motion – Amend Standing Order 58(1)**Proposed:**

Leave out Standing Order 58(1) and insert –

- ‘(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Audit Committee to exercise the functions mentioned in section 66(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and sub-paragraphs 18(2) to (4) of Schedule 1 to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. In accordance with section 66(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, no more than one member of the committee shall at the same time be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.7 Motion – Amend Standing Order 69**Proposed:**

Leave out Standing Order 69 and insert –

‘69. Members’ Interests

- (1) There is to be a register of interests of members of the Assembly (‘the Register of Interests’).
- (2) The Register of Interests must set out the registrable interests of members.
- (3) The Clerk of Standards—
 - (a) must compile, and may from time to time revise, the Register of Interests; and
 - (b) must publish, and make available for public inspection, the Register of Interests.
- (4) A member must—
 - (a) within 28 days of taking his or her seat, inform the Clerk of Standards of his or her registrable interests; and
 - (b) within 28 days of any change to those registrable interests, inform the Clerk of Standards of that change.
- (5) A member who has
 - (a) a financial interest in any matter; or
 - (b) a relevant interest in any matter,
 must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.
- (6) A member must not, in consideration of any payment or benefit in kind specified in Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Rules, advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any person in any proceedings of the Assembly, or urge any other member to do so.

(7) In this order –

“**financial interest**” means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules, other than an interest specified in category 8 or category 9 of Chapter 1;

“**registrable interest**” means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules;

“**relevant interest**” means an interest to which Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules applies.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

7.8 Motion – Amend Standing Order 81

Proposed:

In Standing Order 81, leave out “**Code of Conduct**” means any code of conduct for members together with any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly;

“**day**” means calendar day;’

and insert –

“**Code of Conduct**” means any code of conduct for members and the Guide to the Rules agreed to by the Assembly;

“**day**” means calendar day;

“**Guide to the Rules**” means any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

A single debate ensued on all eight motions.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 10(1) was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 20A was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 44(2) was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 44A(1) was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding New Standing Order was **carried** with cross-community support (Division 3).

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 58(1) was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 69 was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The Question being put, the Motion regarding Standing Order 81 was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

8. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs)

The Assembly adjourned at 8.11pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

14 March 2016

Appendix 1

Northern Ireland Assembly

The undersigned Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly presented a Petition of Concern, in accordance with Standing Order 28, on Friday 11 March 2016, in relation to the Motion – Draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Mr Sydney Anderson
- Mr Jonathan Bell
- Ms Paula Bradley
- Mr Thomas Buchanan
- Mrs Pam Cameron
- Mr Gregory Campbell
- Mr Trevor Clarke
- Mr Jonathan Craig
- Mr Sammy Douglas
- Mr Gordon Dunne
- Mr Alex Easton
- Mrs Arlene Foster
- Mr Paul Frew
- Mr Paul Girvan
- Mr Paul Givan
- Mrs Brenda Hale
- Mr Simon Hamilton
- Mr David Hilditch
- Mr William Humphrey
- Mr William Irwin
- Mr Gordon Lyons
- Mr Nelson McCausland
- Mr Ian McCrea
- Mr David McIlveen
- Miss Michelle McIlveen
- Mr Adrian McQuillan
- Mr Gary Middleton
- The Lord Morrow
- Mr Stephen Moutray
- Mr Robin Newton
- Mrs Emma Pengelly
- Mr Edwin Poots
- Mr George Robinson
- Mr Peter Robinson
- Mr Alastair Ross
- Mr Mervyn Storey
- Mr Peter Weir
- Mr Jim Wells

Northern Ireland Assembly

14 March 2016

Division 1

Motion – The Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 69

Noes: 11

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Diver, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Sheehan, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Diver, Mr Milne.

NOES

Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mrs Overend, Mr Patterson, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kennedy, Mr Patterson.

The Motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

14 March 2016
Division 2

Motion – The Draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

A valid Petition of Concern was presented under Standing Order 28, on Friday 11 March 2016 in relation to the Motion (Appendix 1).

Proposed:

That the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of the Environment

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 48

Noes: 33

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Mr Diver, Mr Durkan, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist

Mr Allen, Mr Beggs, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mrs Overend, Mr Patterson, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Diver, Mr Milne.

NOES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Lyons, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr G Robinson.

Total Votes	81	Total Ayes	48	[59.3%]
Nationalist Votes	27	Nationalist Ayes	27	[100.0%]
Unionist Votes	46	Unionist Ayes	13	[28.3%]
Other Votes	8	Other Ayes	8	[100.0%]

The Motion was **negatived**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

14 March 2016

Division 3

Motion – New Standing Order

Proposed:

After Standing Order 45 insert –

'45A. The Official Opposition

- (1) Subject to paragraph (2), where a party is entitled to nominate a person to hold Ministerial office under section 18 (2) to (6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and declines to do so, that party may choose to be recognised as part of the official opposition.
- (2) A party is not to be recognised as part of the official opposition if any member of that party holds a Ministerial office, or held a Ministerial office and ceased to hold that office otherwise than at a time when all Northern Ireland Ministers ceased to hold office.
- (3) Where only one party chooses to be recognised in accordance with paragraph (1) that party is to be regarded as the official opposition.'

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 39

Noes: 16

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Mr Flanagan, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist

Mr Anderson, Ms P Bradley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Lyons, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McElduff, Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Nationalist

Mr Dallat, Mrs D Kelly, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr A Maginness, Mr Rogers.

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Gardiner, Mr Kennedy, Mr McCallister, Mr Patterson, Mr Swann.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr A Maginness, Mrs McKeivitt.

Total Votes	55	Total Ayes	39	[70.9%]
Nationalist Votes	24	Nationalist Ayes	19	[79.2%]
Unionist Votes	26	Unionist Ayes	20	[76.9%]
Other Votes	5	Other Ayes	0	[0.0%]

The Motion was **carried** with cross-community support.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 9 - 14 March 2016

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Annual Report 01 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 (DHSSPS).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2016/120 The Registration of Fish Buyers and Sellers and Designation of Fish Auction Sites (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DARD).

S.R. 2016/133 The Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DEL).

S.R. 2016/134 The Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (DE).

S.R. 2016/137 The Scrapie (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DARD).

S.R. 2016/141 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Requirement to obtain Audited Accounts and a Statement from the Auditor) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/142 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/143 The Salaries (Public Services Ombudsman) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (Northern Ireland Assembly Commission).

S.R. 2016/144 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Modification of Schemes and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/147 The Social Security (Scottish Rate of Income Tax etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/149 The Social Security (Great Britain Reciprocal Arrangements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/158 The Pensions (2015 Act) (Abolition of Contracting-out for Salary Related Pension Schemes) (Consequential Amendments and Savings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

For Information Only

S.R. 2016/102 The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Amendment of Slavery or Human Trafficking Offences and Relevant UK Orders) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DOJ).

S.R. 2016/121 The Footway (Prohibition of Waiting) (Heather Drive, Newtownabbey) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/124 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Dungannon) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/130 The Urban Clearways Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/131 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

DETI Response to consultation on Closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to new onshore wind in 2016 (DETI).

Health and Social Care Innovation Grant Scheme (DHSSPS).

Proposal for the Railways (Safety Management) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings and Neglected Sites (DOE).

9. Departmental Publications

10. Agency Publications

Police Custody: The Detention of Persons in Police Custody in NI (DOJ).

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 15 March 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 End of Mandate

The Speaker made some remarks to mark the end of the Assembly mandate. Party representatives and other members also spoke.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Consideration of business not concluded on Monday 14 March 2016

The Speaker informed the Assembly that all business listed on the Order Paper for 14 March 2016 was concluded.

3.2 Motion – Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2016

Proposed:

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme NIA 329/11-16 laid before the Assembly on 8 March 2016 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

*Ms P Bradley
Ms C Ruane
Mrs K McKeivitt
Mr S Gardiner
Mrs J Cochrane*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – Initiation of Sign Language Legislation Process

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, made a statement regarding the consultation on a framework for promoting sign language including proposals for legislation, following which she replied to questions.

4.2 Statement – Proposals for an Ulster-Scots Academy and an Irish Language Academy

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, made a statement regarding proposals for an Ulster-Scots academy and an Irish language academy, following which she replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

4.3 Motion – The Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be affirmed.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4.4 Motion – The Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016**Proposed:**

That the Ministerial Offices (Number and Functions) Determination 2016 be approved.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

4.5 Legislative Consent Motion – Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill**Proposed:**

That this Assembly agrees that the Westminster Parliament should consider the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February 2016, dealing with the power in clause 1(4) of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, to nominate two members of the Independent Reporting Commission; and the establishment of new measures relating to the financial responsibility of the Assembly contained in clause 9.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Miss Michelle McIlveen.

5.2 Social Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, the Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley.

5.3 Assembly Commission

Questions were put to, and answered by, Members of the Assembly Commission.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

6. Executive Committee Business (cont'd)

6.1 Legislative Consent Motion – Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.2 Final Stage – Fisheries Bill (NIA Bill 74/11-16)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill, moved that the Final Stage of the Fisheries Bill (NIA Bill 74/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Fisheries Bill (NIA Bill 74/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.3 Final Stage – Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill (NIA Bill 71/11-16)

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, moved that the Final Stage of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill (NIA Bill 71/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill (NIA Bill 71/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.4 Final Stage – Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill (NIA Bill 60/11-16)

The Minister for Social Development, the Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley, moved that the Final Stage of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill (NIA Bill 60/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill (NIA Bill 60/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.5 Final Stage – Mental Capacity Bill (NIA Bill 49/11-16)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved that the Final Stage of the Mental Capacity Bill (NIA Bill 49/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

The Mental Capacity Bill (NIA Bill 49/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.6 Final Stage – Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 68/11-16)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved that the Final Stage of the Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 68/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 68/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.7 Final Stage – Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NIA Bill 72/11-16)

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved that the Final Stage of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NIA Bill 72/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Speaker in the Chair.

The Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NIA Bill 72/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.8 Final Stage – Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16)

The Minister for Regional Development, Miss Michelle McIlveen, moved that the Final Stage of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 78/11-16) passed Final Stage.

6.9 Motion – The Draft Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the draft Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Private Members' Business**7.1 Final Stage – Licensing Bill (NIA Bill 69/11-16)**

Mrs Judith Cochrane, sponsor of the Bill, moved that the Final Stage of the Licensing Bill (NIA Bill 69/11-16) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Licensing Bill (NIA Bill 69/11-16) passed Final Stage.

8. Executive Committee Business**8.1 Statement – Death in Service of Prison Officer Adrian Ismay**

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, made a statement regarding the death in service of Prison Officer Adrian Ismay, following which he replied to questions.

9. Adjournment**Proposed:**

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 9.07pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

15 March 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 15 March 2016

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 (DOJ).

Registry of Credit Unions and Industrial and Provident Societies Annual Report 2014/15 (DETI).

Insolvency Service Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 (DETI).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2016/104 The Health and Social Care (Disciplinary Procedures) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2016/106 The Pensions (2015 Act) (Savings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/162 The Pensions (2015 Act) (Contributions Equivalent Premium) (Consequential Provision) and (Savings) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

S.R. 2016/163 The Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2016/165 The Pension Protection Fund and Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DSD).

For Information Only

S.R. 2016/151 The Loading Bays and Parking Places on Roads (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/152 (C.9) The Water and Sewerage Services (2006 Order) (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/153 The Parking Places on Roads (Motor Cycles) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

S.R. 2016/157 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Omagh) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Major Capital Projects to be Advanced in Planning (DE).

8. Consultation Documents

Proposed Increase to Court Fees (DOJ).

Sign Language Framework with Proposals for Legislation (DCAL).

9. Departmental Publications

Learning Leaders: A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning (DE).

Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (DOJ & DHSSPS).

Call for Evidence - Permitted Development Rights for Mineral Exploration (DOE).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills 16 March 2016

2011-2016 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13	10.02.15 & 11.02.15	24.02.15	Bill fell at Final Stage on 26.05.15	
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14	28.04.15	09.06.15	24.06.15	24.07.15
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14	13.10.14	17.11.14
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14	08.10.14	11.11.14	24.11.14	02.12.14	08.01.15
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15	19.03.15	29.06.15	01.12.15	12.01.16	
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15	25.03.15	02.06.15	16.06.15 & 22.06.15	30.06.15	24.07.15
Education Bill 38/11-16	06.10.14	14.10.14	/	/	21.10.14	11.11.14	17.11.14	11.12.14
Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 39/11-16	07.10.14	10.11.14	13.03.15	03.03.15	23.06.15	06.10.15	08.12.15	29.01.16
Off Street Parking Bill 40/11-16	13.10.14	21.10.14	09.12.14	08.12.14	13.01.15	26.01.15	03.02.15	12.03.15
Food Hygiene (Ratings) Bill 41/11-16	03.11.14	11.11.14	08.05.15	29.04.15	29.06.15	30.11.15	08.12.15	29.01.16
Pensions Bill 42/11-16	10.11.14	18.11.14	26.03.15	19.02.15	24.03.15	21.04.15	11.05.15	23.06.15
Regeneration Bill 43/11-16	08.12.14	20.01.15	28.05.15	28.05.15	Minister not planning to move Bill			

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Budget Bill 45/11-16	09.02.15	16.02/15	/	/	17.02.15	23.02.15	24.02.15	12.03.15
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill 46/11-16	02.03.15	10.03.15	13.11.15	11.11.15	01.12.15	11.01.16	25.01.16	
Mental Capacity Bill 49/11-16	08.06.15	16.06.15	28.01.16	25.01.16	16.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	
Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill 50/11-16	08.06.15	16.06.15	18.12.15	09.12.15	18.01.16	26.01.16	15.02.16	
Water and Sewerage Services Bill 51/11-16	16.06.15	29.06.15	25.11.15	18.11.15	08.12.15	12.01.16	25.01.16	
Health and Social Care (Control of Data Processing) Bill 52/11-16	16.06.15	29.06.15	20.11.15	18.11.15	11.01.16	26.01.16	08.02.16	
Budget (No. 2) Bill 53/11-16	16.06.15	24.06.15	/	/	24.06.15	29.06.15	30.06.15	24.07.15
Pensions Schemes Bill 54/11-16	22.06.15	30.06.15	/	/	16.11.15	23.11.15	24.11.15	15.01.16
Environmental Better Regulation Bill 55/11-16	22.06.15	30.06.15	27.11.15	19.11.15	11.01.16	26.01.16	09.02.16	
Credit Unions and Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Bill 56/11-16	23.06.15	06.01.15	24.11.15	24.11.15	12.01.16	08.02.16	29.02.16	
Justice (No. 2) Bill 57/11-16	30.06.15	08.09.15	15.01.16	14.01.16	10.02.16	01.03.16	14.03.16	
Housing (Amendment) Bill 58/11-16	30.06.15	09.11.15	15.01.16	07.01.16	01.02.16	15.02.16	23.02.16	
Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill 60/11-16	07.09.15	07.12.15	12.2.16	04.02.16	23.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Shared Education Bill 66/11-16	02.11.15	10.11.15	12.01.16	06.01.16	26.01.16	23.02.16	08.03.16	
Rural Needs Bill 67/11-16	09.11.15	17.11.15	26.01.16	26.01.16	15.02.16	29.02.16	08.03.16	
Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill 68/11-16	23.11.15	01.12.15	05.02.16	03.02.16	22.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	
Departments Bill 70/11-16	30.11.15	08.12.15	/	/	19.01.16	01.02.16	02.02.16	29.02.16
Addressing Bullying in Schools 71/ 11-16	30.11.15	08.12.15	09.02.16	08.02.16	22.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	
Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 72/11-16	30.11.15	08.12.15	09.02.16	03.02.16	22.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	
Employment Bill 73/11-16	07.12.15	12.01.16	23.02.16	27.01.16	09.02.16	22.02.16 / 23.02.16	01.03.16	
Fisheries Bill 74/11-16	07.12.15	11.01.16	22.02.16	02.02.16	23.02.16	07.03.16	15.03.16	
Rates (Amendment) Bill 75/ 11-16	11.01.16	19.01.16	/	/	25.01.16	01.02.16	02.02.16	11.03.16
Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Bill 76/ 11-16	12.01.16	25.01.16	/	/	02.02.16	16.02.16	23.02.16	
Budget Bill 77/11-16	08.02.16	09.02.16	/	/	15.02.16	16.02.16	23.02.16	
Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment) Bill 78/11-16	22.02.16	01.03.16	/	/	07.03.16	14.03.16	15.03.16	

**2011-2016 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14	20.10.14	01.12.14	09.12.14	13.01.15
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13	17.02.15	16.10.15	14.10.15				
Children's Services Co-operation Bill 44/11-16	08.12.14	26.01.15	03.07.15	02.07.15	29.09.15	19.10.15	03.11.15	09.12.15
Public Services Ombudsperson Bill 47/11-16	20.04.15	11.05.15	30.09.15	29.09.15	20.10.15	30.11.15 / 01.02.16	10.02.16	19.02.16
Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints (Amendment) Bill 48/11-16	27.04.15	11.05.15	/	/	01.06.15	08.06.15	09.06.15	20.07.15
Rates (Relief for Amateur Sports Clubs) Bill 59/11-16	30.06.15	Bill fell at Second Stage on 20.10.15						
Civil Service (Special Advisers) (Amendment) Bill 61/11-16	14.09.15	Bill fell at Second Stage on 13.10.15						
Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Bill 62/11-16	22.09.15	12.10.15	26.01.16	20.01.16	02.02.16 / 08.02.16	16.02.16	29.02.16	

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Local Government (Numbers and Addresses in Townlands) Bill 63/11-16	12.10.15	Bill fell at Second Stage on 17.11.15						
Human Transplantation Bill 64/11-16	13.10.15	16.11.15	05.02.16	03.02.16	Member not planning to move Bill			
Scrap Metal Dealers Bill 65/11-16	19.10.15	16.11.15	19.02.16	11.02.16	29.02.16			
Licensing Bill 69/11-16	24.11.15	07.12.15	19.02.16	16.02.16	29.02.16	08.03.16	15.03.16	

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.